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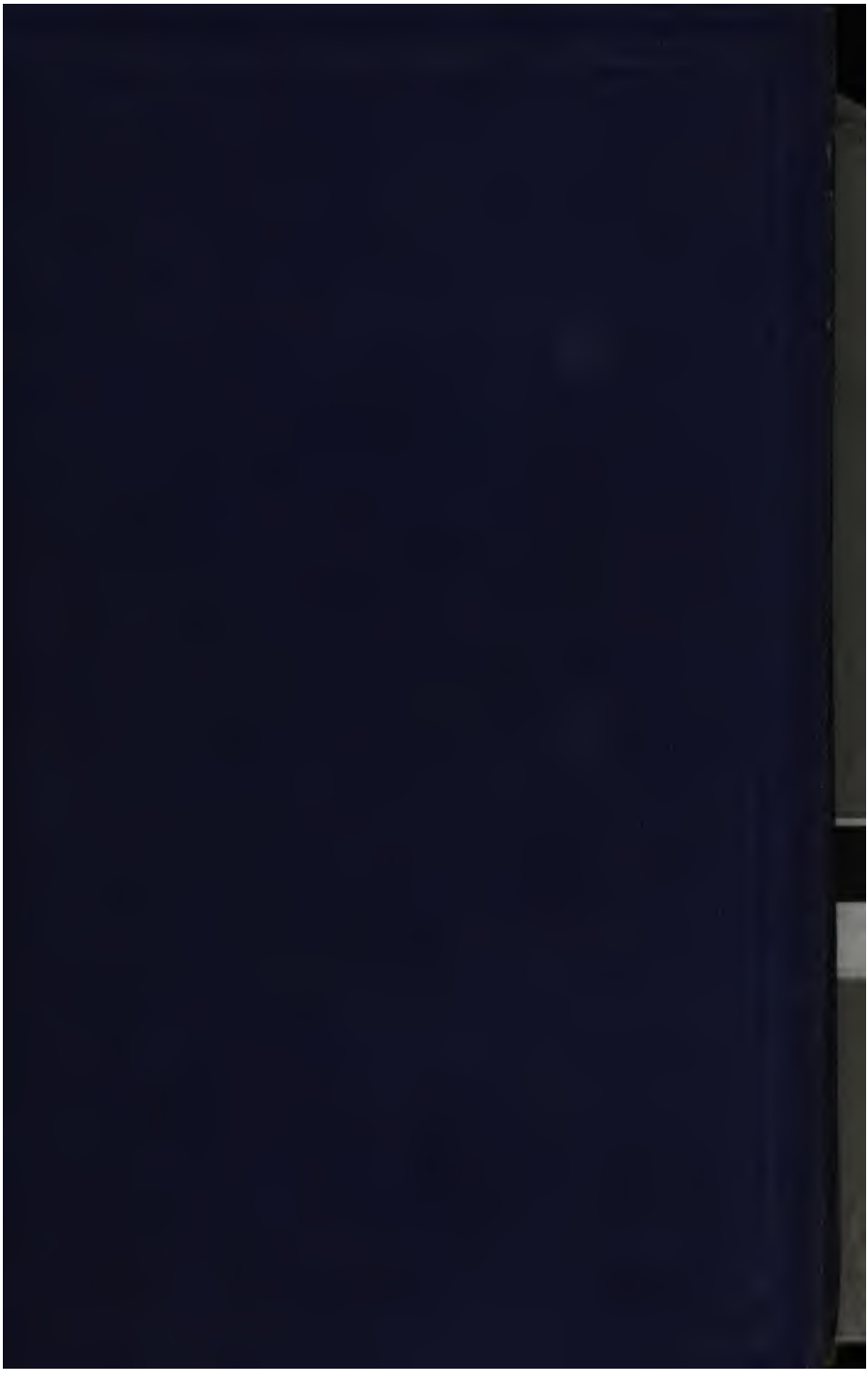

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Jas. Nourse
1882

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Jas. Mont
1882

The Mysteries of Isis;

OR, THE

COLLEGE LIFE OF PAUL ROMAINE.

A STORY OF OXFORD.

" . . . . we stroll'd
For half the day thro' stately theatres
Bench'd crescent-wise. In each we sat, we heard
The grave Professor.
* * * * * * * *
Scarce had I ceased when from a tamarisk near
Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying, 'Names.'"

TENNYSON: *The Princess.*

BIBLIOTHECA
AUG 1882
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Oxford:
T. & G. SHRIMPTON, BROAD STREET.
LONDON: WARD, LOCK, & TYLER.
MDCCCLXVI.

251. i. 955.

PREFACE.

THERE is no dearth of novels purporting to be stories of University life; but there is a strong objection to be urged against many of them—that they are not what they purport to be.

Speaking generally, these works may be divided into two classes: the one presenting an amusing caricature of some of the best known facts in College life, somewhat in the style of *Punch;* the other class tinged with a morbidly religious colouring, describing the struggles of a good young man—a saint in everything but the canonization—surrounded by other young men of the conventional villain type.

Now, as a fact, neither saints nor villains of the blackest dye are commonly met with, either at the University or elsewhere, but common-place men of every-day life. My object in this book is to describe some scenes of Oxford life and character as they really are; not as they might be, or as they are supposed to be by the imagination of fanciful and

non-University writers. Most books hitherto published on the subject of College life have been written by those who have entered into the inner sanctuary of the Mysteries of Isis—who, in other words, have taken their degree, and become probably Dons. This book is written from another point of view, and attempts to paint Oxford life seen not from the rostrum or the pulpit, but from the undergraduates' gallery, and the undergraduate's rooms.

I have been careful to build the very slender fabric of my story upon a foundation of fact, and most of the events narrated in these pages are strictly true. It may be reasonably urged against me that I have neither "pointed a moral" nor "adorned a tale." I can only say simply that I have not tried to do either. Books with an obtrusive moral always pointed are highly objectionable, as a rule. Perhaps the whole story may strike some readers as a mere shadowy outline, wanting completion, wanting to have the characters drawn out and gone into. I have purposely sacrificed all details of plot to the scenes in Oxford, and have preferred to introduce the characters out of Oxford merely as supernumeraries.

I am fully sensible of the errors and defects of this volume, many of them occasioned by the haste which great stress of work has compelled me to use in the completion of my task. If, however, those of my own standing in the

University derive any pleasure from the perusal of these pages, and if those to whom Oxford life and doings are as a sealed book find their ideas enlightened and their views modified, I shall not have written in vain.

OXFORD, *April*, 1866.

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"I don't think it'll hurt him much," answered Mr. Chunter gruffly; "but let me have another cup of tea, Mrs. C., or the 'bus will be here before I've swallowed my breakfast."

From this little fragment of conversation, it may be presumed that Mr. Chunter, of Sloane Street, was not one of the Upper Ten Thousand, otherwise he probably would not have said *'bus* when he spoke of the brown vehicle which called for him every morning at a quarter past nine. What Mr. Chunter was exactly, is a difficult question to answer. He was one of that mysterious class of persons who are "something in the City." I have reason to believe that he had once done something in the coal way, that he had done a little in the gas way, and had even ventured a little in the oil and tallow way; but in what particular "way" Mr. Chunter was at this period, I have no means of knowing. I believe that his name appeared "somewhere" in the City in connexion with the Icthyosaurus Insurance Company, "limited;" but whether this was Mr. Chunter's sole place of business, fame records not. He was, however, well off, and most respectable. That is what all his acquaintance said of him: he was so very respectable. He was one of those men whose coats are always well brushed, who wear light green waistcoats in summer, whose hats carry a look of respectability in the very broadness of their brims, whose boots are always shiny, and whose leather gloves never seem to get dirty. Mr. Chunter was fat too, and if not exactly "well-liking," he was at least *most respectable.*

Mrs. Chunter was not an amiable woman: truth compels me to say so. She was a mournful, desponding sort of person, with a face puckered up into lachrymose wrinkles, a mouth perpetually drawn down at the corners, and two thin

bunches of wiry ringlets, which used to shake in sympathy with the mournful oscillations of her head. Why Mrs. Chunter was unhappy no one knew, nor do I believe that she really *was* unhappy at all; but she liked sighing and mourning over imaginary troubles better than meeting the real ones when they came, and so she poured out a tale of annoyance and vexations into the ears of her sadly bored friends, who were always prepared for her initiatory sigh, and, "Ah! my dear, you can't think how I've been worried lately!" Yet with all this, Mrs. Chunter was really an estimable woman: she was an affectionate mother, though her daily parable was taken up against the sorrows which had come upon her, owing to her three children in infancy and in later times, the illnesses of her two daughters, and the anxieties caused by her "Henery," as she always *would* pronounce that name, about whom you heard just now. Mrs. Chunter had a way of dressing herself in the most hideous and unbecoming dresses (only in the house, to be sure), saying that her dear girls must have proper clothes, but anything would do for her. "And then, my dear, Mr. Chunter *does* worry so, and there's no getting him to sympathize about the darlings' dresses, and so, of course, it all comes upon me, and what to do at times I really don't know."

In process of time Mr. Chunter departed to the City, and soon after, the girls came down to breakfast, not having made their appearance during the rapid meal of Chunter *père*. Honoria Chunter was one of those girls who are always called "fine." Some people said she was too large, too bouncing, and that her brown eyes were too bold; but these expressions savour too much of cynicism, and ought of course never to be spoken of a young lady, who is never more than "fine," even

if she *be* large. Honoria's face, too, was really good, full of expression, and at times that expression was a very decided one. The young lady's voice was somewhat of the loudest, as with her sister Clara she entered the breakfast-room, exclaiming, "So Pa's gone, I see."

"Yes, my dear," said her mother dolorously, "and I dare say your Papa would have liked to see his girls before going."

"Well, really Ma," says Miss Honoria, sitting down to breakfast, "if Pa goes at such a ridiculously early hour, he can't expect us always to be down in time. Besides, this morning I was ready, but Clara was fidgeting about her dress ever so long before she would come down."

Now this statement was not altogether veracious; but Honoria often snubbed her sister, who had but lately "come out," whereas Honoria had undergone the fatigues of two seasons, so, of course, it was quite right and proper; and Clara, being a quiet, timid little thing, said nothing to her sister's snub, but took it meekly, as a younger sister should.

Presently Clara took up the paper, and said eagerly, "I wonder whether it says about the Oxford scholarship, and whether Henry has got it?"

"No, my dear, poor Henery has not got the scholarship," said Mrs. Chunter, with a mournful shake of her ringlets; "but I am sure there must be some underhand cheating, or he must have got it, for he's very clever and well read, and so much money, too, spent on his education, and everybody said he'd get it, and Doctor O'Shea said so."

"I know what Henry said himself," says Miss Honoria, from her tea-cup; "he said he knew he should *floor* the papers well enough. That was the elegant expression he used; and it seems he was too certain, that's all."

"I wonder when the poor boy will be back. I'm afraid he'll be dreadfully disappointed." This in a tone of more than ordinary lachrymosity from Mrs. Chunter.

By and by the subject of this conversation arrived, in the person of a young man, rather over-dressed, and with remarkably *nonchalant* manners. He was not good-looking, in spite of his careful "get up;" his hair, which was of an undecided tint, inclining towards red, was parted in the middle, over a narrow brow. Two small eyes looked out of a white face, one eye looking perpetually through the medium of an eye-glass; and a little more hair, still more undecided in tint, and very weak, straggled about over the young gentleman's cheeks.

Mr. Henry Chunter walked very coolly into the room, and was greeted with:

"My poor Henery! How sorry I am."

"Oh! you mean about the scholarship," says the young man, condescendingly; "no, I've not got it. Fact is, they set a lot of Iambics, and I can't do Iambics, and so another fellar got it, you see."

"And what are Iambics?" asks Mrs. Chunter.

"Oh! nothing you can understand about."

"They must be something wonderful indeed, if Henry says he can't do them," remarks Miss Honoria.

"Now don't you chaff, Miss," says Mr. Henry, arranging himself comfortably on the sofa, "because you know nothing about it. It don't matter much about the scholarship: I've matriculated all right."

"You've matric—" says Mrs. Chunter, doubtfully.

"Entered at the College, you know; and I shall go up to reside next October."

"But won't your father expect to be consulted first?" asks his mother; while Honoria tosses her head, and says, "Well, I'm sure!"

"Oh! I'll make that all right. The governor likes a gentlemanly college, and St. Chrysostom's is quite the cheese just now."

So saying, Henry Chunter examines his boots, and plays casually with the assortment of lockets, gridirons, boats, and horse-shoes, which hang from his watch-chain.

"And what do you think of Oxford, Henry," asks sister Clara.

"Oh! it's rather a jolly place, I should say; plenty of water, you know. And haven't they got a good idea of a feed there! Piggy Henslow—you know Piggy was at school with me—well, he's up at Lincoln now, and he gave a spread at Boffin's, in the High, and it was no end good: the cider-cup's first-rate; I think I'll make some."

"How do you mean you met Mr. Henslow, when you say he's at Lincoln?" asks innocent Mrs. Chunter.

"At Lincoln *College*, mother; only nobody talks about colleges or streets, they say Lincoln, and Brasenose, and the High, and the Broad," explains Henry.

"Are you going with us to the botanic *fête* to-day, Henry?" says Honoria.

"Ah, well, I don't know. Don't think I shall. Won't be many girls there, I expect. If you've got no one to go with I don't mind, though."

"Oh! you needn't trouble; Captain Halkett is going to call for us."

"Ah, then I certainly shan't go; hate that fellar Halkett. Over-bearing sort of chap. Hate over-bearing fellars."

"I know why," says Miss Honoria, as the ladies retire to dress, "because the Captain shuts up poor Henry—to use one of his own expressions—and he can't say a word in return."

And so they went to the gardens, and Captain Halkett, a gentleman with extremely black whiskers and moustache, acted the part of squire of dames.

When Mr. Chunter returned to his Penates, his reception of Henry was not particularly cordial. That young gentleman, however, was extremely cool and self-contained, and worked strongly on his father's weak point, by telling him that he had entered a first-rate college, all gentlemen; several noble families, he believed. He was, he said, obliged to matriculate at once, as there was no room to spare, and the Master told him he would not get a chance later. So Mr. Chunter yielded with a grunt, and was, to use his son's words, "druv into a corner."

"I hope, sir, that you'll read hard till October," said Mr. Chunter, in conclusion, "so that you'll be ready for the examinations, and all that, after the money your schooling has cost."

"Oh! I shall be all right," says Henry; "they'll find me up to them next time, I know. By the by, father, I shall want some wine, you know; and that port of Corker's won't do to set before Oxford men."

CHAPTER II.

HOW THEY TOLD THE GOOD NEWS AT INGLEFELL.

Inglefell village is not an important place, so that the intelligent reader may be forgiven for not knowing that it stands in a very pretty part of the country, a few miles from the large and flourishing town of Grey Abbots. Not to know Grey Abbots would show gross ignorance certainly, for it is a very important place, sends a member to Parliament, and being very near the cathedral town of Newhampton, and under the immediate eye of the Bishop of Newhampton, has a large and influential population, both clerical and lay. No one had been better known, or more popular in Grey Abbots, than the Reverend Reginald Romaine, incumbent of the principal church in the town. Mr. Romaine had been a popular man for several reasons. Because he was well born, and had Lord St. Elmo for a cousin; hence the aristocracy of Grey Abbots liked him. Then he was rich, and liberal with his money; hence most people liked him. And, finally, he was an accomplished scholar, and a brilliant talker in society; qualities which gained him respect and admiration as well in the pulpit as the drawing-room.

During Mr. Romaine's life and ministry at Grey Abbots, his wife and two children held a foremost place in the society

of the neighbourhood, so that a change from such a position was all the more severely felt. That change came, however. Mr. Romaine, who had been a rich man, suddenly became a poor one, by the failure of a bank in which he had lodged large sums, and by the fraud of a man whose surety he had become in an evil hour. Sorrow and vexation hurried on a disease which had long threatened him, and with his death the greater part of the income of the Romaines ended. The blow was a cruel one to bear. Mrs. Romaine found herself, after a life accustomed to ease and gratified tastes, reduced to a very slender income, out of which she must support her son Paul, just completing his course at Eton, and her daughter Maude, a girl of seventeen. Fortunately, however, Mrs. Romaine had not become a fine lady: wealth and ease had not made her neglect her duties as a mother, and as the wife of a clergyman; and now that the dark side of the picture was turned to her, she determined to do and to bear nobly, whatever fortune might await her and her children. Changes came very fast upon one another. The grand home at Grey Abbots was left, the grand furniture sold, and Mrs. Romaine and Maude retired to Inglefell, some five miles distant from the town, where a pretty little cottage received the two mourners after their sorrows.

It is early morning in this little cottage, and Mrs. Romaine sits by the open window, where the woodbine clusters, looking out upon the garden, bright with such roses and wall-flowers as only a cottage garden can produce. Near her, and busy with a vase of these same cottage flowers, is Maude, a fresh, fair little maiden, with smooth, glossy dark hair, very large and innocent eyes, and as bright a rosebud of a mouth as one could find in all England. The black dresses, and the look of

subdued sadness on the faces of the mother and daughter, tell plainly enough of their recent loss; but the first sting of anguish has passed away, and they have found that they may be as happy in their cottage home as they were in their town house—as happy as they can be now *he* is gone! On this particular morning, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Romaine's hands are busy with her needle, and that Maude is arranging flowers, with a look as demure as a sister of charity,—in spite of all this, the two ladies are as excited as they can possibly be, and a close observer would at once detect them, if he only noted the furtive looks which Mrs. Romaine keeps casting towards the high road, and the tremulous way in which Maude holds her roses and sweet-briar.

"Will the paper *never* come, Mamma?" exclaims Maude, at last, throwing off the very transparent mask which she has been wearing.

"It can't be here for an hour yet," says Mrs. Romaine. "The carrier never gets here till eleven, you know."

"Then Paul should have written. He must know how anxious we are." And Miss Maude commences a spirited hunt after an earwig which had appeared among the roses.

"Yes, he might have written, I think," says her mother; "but he always does what is right. Perhaps he was detained, or engaged till after the post time. What is the matter, Maude? how you startled me!"

Miss Maude had suddenly relinquished the earwig chase, and had sprung up to the door, and thence darted into the garden. "I hear a horse galloping, Mamma," she says through the window, "it may be some one with news; I'm *sure* it is."

A young man rides up to the gate as she speaks, and takes

off his hat to the ladies. "Good morning, Mrs. Romaine; good morning, Miss Maude," says the horseman, getting down and opening the gate; "I hope you'll excuse this early visit, but I thought I should like to tell you the good news first."

"Then Paul has gained—" Mrs. Romaine stops doubtfully.

"Yes, he has got the scholarship. See, here is the *Times*, with the announcement." And good-natured Tom Benson gives the paper into the ladies' hands, open at this paragraph:—

UNIVERSITY INTELLIGENCE.

Oxford, June 2nd.

The scholarships at St. Chrysostom's College have been this day awarded to:—

Mr. Paul Romaine, from Eton.
Mr. Charles Douglas, from Harrow.
Proxime accessit—Mr. Percy Cheyne.

"How good of you to bring us this news, Mr. Benson," says Mrs. Romaine, with sparkling eyes.

"Not at all, not at all," answers Tom, getting on horseback as fast as he can. "I congratulate you, I'm sure; always thought Romaine was a clever fellow. Good-bye, ladies;" and he is off directly, before they can ask him to come in. To speak truth, they do not want him to come just then: they want to read the brief notice over again aloud to each other, and then to kiss each other, as women will, and to cry a little from sheer pleasure, and to wonder when their paragon, their phœnix Paul, will come back.

"Now your dear father's last wish can be fulfilled, my child," Mrs. Romaine says, when they have exhausted these matters. "Paul will be able to go to the University, which otherwise he could never have done. He, at least, will not feel the weight of poverty at present."

"Oh, I am so glad!" cries little Maude, clapping her little white hands. "I know Paul will be a grand fellow at Oxford, and will get all sorts of prizes and things, and a fellowship at last!"

If all these loving prophecies were fulfilled, how rich we should some of us be!

I am ashamed to say how little practising Maude did this day on the piano (not a first-rate one now), or how little of Gibbon's "Roman Empire" she read, instead of her daily allowance of that work. The fact is, both mother and daughter were in a state of great restlessness, till the arrival of Paul Romaine himself, a short time before the dinner hour. If you have already drawn a portrait of this young man, depicting him as pale, thin, narrow-chested, and wearing spectacles, be pleased at once to make away with the caricature. Paul Romaine, in his twentieth year, was a tall, largely-made man, over six feet high, with a great broad chest, and sinewy long arms. He was not handsome, strangely enough, some people thought, for both his parents had been so, and little Maude, you know, was very pretty. Yet Paul's face was far more likely to attract attention than that of many better-looking men. There was character strongly marked in the bold, dark eyes, in the finely-cut mouth, with lips rather too thin and too closely drawn together, in the broad, smooth brow, in the whole face in fact. In looking at him, people would notice this, and would not see that his black hair was too long, or that his hands and neck were as brown as a gipsy's.

Paul Romaine received the loud plaudits of his mother and sister very quietly. "Never mind the honour now, dear mother," said he. "I might have thought more of that once:

now I look at it from a 'filthy lucre' point of view, as it enables me to go up to Oxford, and takes one drag off your little income."

"But we shall be very lonely without you, dear Paul," Maude said, a little sadly—and her voice was all the sweeter when it was sad—"now we have nobody but you, you know."

"Duty, like necessity, has no law but its own," says Mr. Paul, gravely: he was very grave, for so young a man. "It will be better for me to be gaining the possible means of a future livelihood, than to be idling at home, and adding to your burden. Our little barque needs my broad shoulders to keep it afloat, not my great hulking weight to help to sink it, Maude dear."

"And tell us all you think of Oxford," said the mother, looking up lovingly, as only a mother can look, into the bold, manly face which was towering up before her; "I recollect the beautiful city quite well: I went there years ago with your dear father."

"It is a grand old place, beautiful now in the summer as fairyland, with the bright trees down by Magdalen at the end of the High, and the sun slanting on the old grey fronts of the colleges. The romance wears off very soon, I suppose; but one's first glimpse of Oxford is very enchanting. I hadn't much time to look about me, though, as I was in the examination from ten till four each day, and came down here directly I had made my visit to the Vice-Chancellor, and had been matriculated. By the by, that was awful nonsense. The old Vice-Chancellor looked very gruff, and said something in Latin which nobody understood, and then gave us each a copy of the statutes, bound in a flaming magenta cover, and we signed our names in Latin; and one fellow's name was Harry, and they

didn't know whether to Latinize it or not; and then we paid up some money and it was all over."

"You will have plenty of time before you go into residence," said Mrs. Romaine. "This is only the beginning of June, and the term commences on the 8th of October, I see by the almanack."

"Yes, but we don't meet till the 16th; the University term has nothing to do with the College, so the Dean told me at St. Chrysostom's. By the by, I don't like the looks of that man at all. He's an oily, fat man, with a white face, and a soft, moist hand. He never looks you in the face when he's near you, but at a distance gets you in the focus of his eye-glass, which is for ever in his eye. He never speaks up at once like an honest man, but drawls out his words in a measured sort of way, and says 'Ah' between each sentence, as though he were pumping up his words from a very deep well."

"What a horrid man!" cried Maude.

"My dears, do not think ill of him on so slight an occasion," said gentle Mrs. Romaine. "His manner is against him, I dare say, but perhaps you will like him very much, Paul, when you get to know him better."

"I expect not, mother; I think I know my man pretty well already."

"At all events do not make him your enemy. Try to make him like *you*."

"What! fawn upon him, and be a humbug?" says Paul, shrugging his great shoulders. "Well, if he's civil to me, I don't suppose he'll find me anything but a gentleman. So we'll let Mr. Swade rest now, I think."

"Is Swade his name? What a very ugly name, to be

sure," said Maude, who espoused Paul's side warmly in this matter.

"He seems fond of it, at all events," replied her brother; "he calls himself Richard Swade Swade."

"There, let the poor man be, and come to dinner." Mrs. Romaine's patience was exhausted by the Swade controversy; and so they went to dinner.

All through the summer and autumn there was much to be done in preparing for Paul's departure; and the loving women liked to think it more than it really was, that they might have the more to do for the dear one who was going away from them, though the term was only two months long; but then they never thought of that. During this time, however, they began to realize more clearly what it is to be poor. The *res angusta domi* often stared them in the face in a most cruel manner when they wanted to buy some new thing or other for Paul; and that gentleman said decidedly, "No, we can't afford it, and can do very well without the thing, and we *must* keep the expenses down."

Perhaps Paul, who knew exactly what their income was understood the straitened state of their finances better than the others; for women, while they have actually some money in hand, and see the bread and cheese on the table as usual, are inclined to ignore the idea of poverty, and to be hopeful as they always are, and to procrastinate with the stern truth as they generally do, and to trust in that pleasant fallacious feminine watchword, "All will come right in the end." Paul Romaine's broad brow often grew dark as he considered the narrow means which were left them, and often he puzzled his brains to find some way of adding to their little store. But it could not be done yet. He must wait: he must work, gain honour, then work again for bread.

So the roses bloomed and died at Inglefell, the leaves grew red and fluttered to their graves, the autumn winds sang a shrill song round the cottage eaves; and with the tears and kisses, and loving wishes, and promises to write *very* often, which are given and will be given to the end of the chapter, Paul Romaine went up to Oxford.

CHAPTER III.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM'S.

ST. CHRYSOSTOM'S COLLEGE, Oxford, to which two of our friends have now betaken themselves, is one of the larger colleges, and contains, with its bachelors, scholars, and commoners, considerably over a hundred men. In an intellectual point of view, St. Chrysostom's, or, as it is usually called at Oxford, St. Chrys'toms, does not hold a first-rate rank; so that Balliol and Corpus, which pride themselves on a sort of monopoly of the Class Lists, are rather inclined to look down on St. Chrys'tom's. In other respects, however, the college is very popular. It is *gentlemanly:* you will find the names of a family on the books from father to son for generations, and those names are always those of gentlemen. In athletic prowess too, St. Chrysostom's has always held a foremost place: on the river, the well-known colours of the college crew are always seen at or near the winning-post; in the hot cricket-fields along the Cowley road, the Chrysostom's eleven are always good players; and at the "grinds," or athletic sports of the winter, the same success is invariably theirs.

Paul Romaine and Henry Chunter, when they took their seats in the beautiful chapel of the college, on the evening of their arrival, had ample opportunities of observing the Dons,

under whose authority they now found themselves. As they dropped into chapel, one after another, Paul watched them with a critical eye. He fancied himself an accurate judge of character: perhaps he was, though it is a pet notion of many young men. The Master of St. Chrysostom's, the Rev. Dr. Benison, who entered his place first, was a grey-haired, stout, amiable-looking man, with a weak face, and double gold spectacles. Every one knows, or at least ought to know, that a Head of a College has nothing to do, and therefore his qualifications for the office need not be extensive. Most Heads have distinguished themselves as young men, and have, through patronage and popularity, dropped into their *otium cum dignitate* at last. Dr. Benison had not been remarkable for anything; but being well connected, rich, and inoffensive, was just the man to be elected to the Mastership, and was elected accordingly.

The real ruler of the college was the Dean, the Rev. Richard Swade Swade, who, with his gold eye-glass securely fixed in his right eye, surveyed from his reading-desk the assembled college with an expression which, to say the least of it, was not prepossessing. As Paul Romaine looked towards him, and saw the unctuous smile which something or other had called up on the Dean's white lips, his previous dislike to the man returned with all its former force now increased tenfold. Just then, a young man in a dainty white surplice and bright new crimson hood, which was allowed to hang carelessly (that is, arranged carefully) over his right arm, entered the chapel. He was very handsome, with light waving hair and long whiskers, and his white hands were profusely adorned with rings. This was Mr. Frederick St. Albyn, a young man of good family, who was reported to be heir to a peerage, if

certain objectionable persons died in due course, and who was known in Oxford for his love of dress, his elegant manners, his laziness, and his Latin prose.

The three remaining tutors took their places almost together, just before the service commenced. One, a large-headed man, with grizzled hair, which was stuck up on all sides, like "quills upon the fretful porcupine," was Mr. Tillotson, the Bursar, a nervous, retiring personage, who stammered when spoken to suddenly. Near him sat a little man, with a white face, and small ferret-like eyes, which he never removed from his prayer-book during the service, making the responses in a slow and somewhat nasal tone, which could be heard disagreeably above the voices of the rest. The Rev. Peter Smee was not popular in the college. He was offensively pious: he carried his piety about with him like a tract, and offered it to every one he met. The cut of his coat, the spotless whiteness of his tie and face, and the measured stretch of his small and (it must be said) rather crooked legs, all said as plainly as possible: "If you are worldly, or sinful, or particularly jovial, keep away from me—*I* am pious."

One more portrait, and you will have all the Dons of St. Chrysostom's before you, as Paul Romaine had as he sat in chapel. It is not, it must be confessed, the portrait of a handsome man. A tall, thin, ungainly personage, with a large, ill-kept black beard, and grizzled hair that had apparently known no brush for days, with a pair of keen, good-humoured eyes, which twinkled shrewdly through his spectacles, and were surmounted by bushy, fierce-looking eyebrows. Such was Thomas Barker, whose appearance was neither very clerical nor very intellectual; and yet the highest honours of the University had fallen to the share of this eccentric man;

and the rough-bearded, out-spoken Barker had gained in his time the Craven Scholarship, the Newdigate, the Latin Essay, and a First Class. Every one in Oxford knew "Tommy Barker of St. Chrys'tom's." Most men knew his eccentric manners, his rough, rugged ways; and some few knew also, and appreciated, the real kind-heartedness which lay hidden beneath that uncouth chrysalis. His queer, bold sayings, on all kinds of subjects, were quoted at many a college common-room, and "Tommy Barker's last," was always well received. Some few shook their heads, as is the fashion with some *very* wise people, and hinted that Barker of St. Chrysostom's was a doubtful character, a believer in unorthodox creeds, and an unbeliever in orthodox dogmas: some went so far as to say that he was an unbeliever altogether, and ought to be deprived of his fellowship: but then these were the stricter *Christians*, and their sentiments were natural.

Paul found that the rooms assigned him were comfortable, though by no means luxurious: his narrow means could allow of no extravagance in furniture, or indeed in anything. The rooms suited him very well, however: they were high up, among the gable roofs of the college; and from his windows, back and front, he could see the sky uninterruptedly; and not far off rose the glorious spire of St. Mary's, whose mighty chimes rang out clear and loud to Paul's ear as he sat by his open window.

For the first night or two after his arrival, Paul stayed long at his window, and looked up fixedly into the still blue sky, bright with stars; and his thoughts flew, as only such airy things as thoughts know how to fly, to Inglefell Cottage, miles and miles away, and to the quiet gentle mother at home, and to bright-eyed merry little Maud, and all the

scenes of their new home. Though a great strong fellow, over six feet, rather rough sometimes, and given to using strong language (very objectionable language, some people said), yet Paul had in him as strong and tender a vein of sentiment as any young girl at a boarding-school, except that his was real *sentiment*, not milk-and-water *sentimentality*. He could sit and dream at times, when he was not working, and build sunny *Châteaux en Espagne*, and write poetry, too, and sometimes it was not very bad. But with all this, our friend could not endure a *professional* sentimentalist, a man of the sad countenance brotherhood, with limp collar, mournful eyes, and an oft-used pocket-handkerchief. He used to say, in his dogmatic way, "A man that can't be sentimental sometimes ought not to live; but a man that's *always* so ought never to have been born."

And so Paul looked at the calm October sky, and thought of what the dear ones were doing at home, till a knock came at his door and disturbed him, and there entered a young man with fair hair and laughing blue eyes, and the most pleasant face that Paul ever recollected to have seen.

"I don't know whether you remember me, Romaine," said the visitor, holding out his hand. "I was up, trying for the scholarship when you were the lucky man."

"Oh, yes, I remember you now," said Paul, returning the friendly grasp of his companion's hand. "You were honourably mentioned, I think. It's a pity you did not lick the Harrow man."

"I did as well as I expected," said Percy Cheyne, sitting down in Paul's favourite arm-chair; "better, too, in fact. How do you like this place?"

"Well, you see," answered Paul, smiling, "I haven't seen

much of it yet, but what I have seen I like very well. Of course one can't judge of the men; but they don't much matter to me, as I don't expect to know many."

"Why, you're not going to be a hermit, are you?"

"Oh, no! Only I can't give wines and spreads and so on *now*, and I don't choose to go to other men's if I don't invite them again; and I suppose acquaintances are not kept up here without that sort of thing, any more than they are anywhere else."

As he spoke, a shade passed over Paul's face: he was for the first time realizing poverty, a word he had not known at Eton, where, with plenty of money, and among extravagant sons of the noblest and wealthiest families, he had lived in the same style as the mad-cap lords and younger sons with whom he associated.

Percy Cheyne's quick eye saw the dark shade, and understood the rather scornful tone of his companion. "A proud fellow, with little money," he thought, "and I should say a deuce of a bad temper."

"You are the first man that has called on me as yet, Cheyne," said Paul presently. "Who have you seen? Give me a bird's-eye view of St. Chrys'tom's as you have seen it."

"Oh, I don't know anybody worth speaking of yet. I was at a wine at Denbeigh's rooms last night, and saw eight or ten in-college men. One man was an Honourable, I find: Allington, son of somebody or other, I forget who."

"He was at Eton: I remember him," said Paul; "He's Lord Trefoil's son, a sort of 'Haw, dem' it!' kind of fellow, isn't he?"

"Yes, he seemed rather in that line: took up the supercilious style of business rather heavily. There was a Jewy-

looking card there too, Slowman they called him: a mild softening of Solomon, no doubt. He seemed an awful cad, and drank more liquor than any two other men. There was only one worse man present, a fellow named Stropper, and he certainly is a most tremendous snob. I shouldn't have expected to find such a specimen in Oxford."

"Oh! there are snobs everywhere, depend upon it. But hang it, Cheyne, your description isn't altogether prepossessing; was the whole wine made up of these cads?"

"No, there were lots of very jolly men, only I can't recollect their names now. These fellows caught my attention, that's why I mentioned them. And to tell you the truth, Romaine, I thought you'd sooner hear of a fellow whom you could slang, than about 'nice men,' who are 'all our fancy painted 'em,' you know."

"You think I'm Diogenes, then, I suppose."

"Well, perhaps a little in that line; but you've got a precious comfortable tub of your own here, where I'll often look in, if you'll let me. And now I must be off to Balliol. My rooms are not far from yours: number four, one pair, five, if you can understand the formula of the porter. Mind you come and look me up soon."

Paul was greatly taken with this man. His frank, free-spoken words, his honest open face, made a favourable impression on our friend's mind; who, to say truth, was not usually pleased with people at the first glance. He was wise in some matters beyond his years, and by no means believed the world was a paradise, seen through *couleur de rose* spectacles, and peopled with innocent Adams and Eves, without any suspicion of a serpent. Paul saw more serpent than anything else in the world. He was cynical, you will say.

Perhaps he was: some events in a man's life *will* make him cynical; that is, will make him see the world in its nakedness, without any gew-gaws or bedizening. We all know how charming old Lady B. looks, at an evening party; but see her at the toilet, and it is a very *monstrum horrendum!* So with the world: see it in its go-to-meeting-dress, pious, oily, unctuous, how good it seems! See it in its evening dress, how fair, how perfumed; rather indelicate, perhaps, but never mind, *so* agreeable! And see it *au naturel*, all the paint off, all the piety put away, all the stiffening out of the petticoats, it is not a pleasant sight, believe me. Paul Romaine had seen something of this: he had seen a good and affectionate father ruined, and by that ruin his own family impoverished, through "a friend," one of those strange people whom we are unfortunate enough to pick up in the world, and who end by robbing us; and they are called *friends:* surely the English language is weak if it provides no more suitable name for them! At Eton, too, Paul had seen a good deal of that incipient life which every great public school produces; and so on the whole he was, as Percy Cheyne had shrewdly guessed, rather inclined to the tenets of the Philosopher of the Tub.

As Paul fell into the routine of daily life at St. Chrysostom's, he became aware of certain facts hitherto unknown. First, he learnt that Oxford in the winter term, and to a freshman, is by no means the delightful place which a great many people imagine it. It always rains at Oxford if it does anywhere; and when morning after morning the noisy chapel-bell awoke Paul to a scene of grey sky, drearily dripping rain, and a wet slushy quad, his enthusiasm for Oxford went down several degrees. He realized another fact, too, which was this: though poverty at Oxford is by no means

looked on as a disgrace, and is not often sneered at, yet Paul soon saw that a vast distinction is made between the rich, even the moderately moneyed man, and the professedly poor. No very poor man, unless in rare instances, when he happens to be an accomplished buffoon or first-rate singer, ever frequents many wine-parties, or the like, for the very excellent reason that he is not asked. The man who can't afford to give such entertainments himself, or to subscribe liberally to those endless subscriptions which are always going about a college, very soon finds his acquaintance drop off into mere nodding automatons, and the familiar words, "Come to wine to-night," or, "Come to my rooms after Hall," are heard no more.

Somehow or other the character of a man's income, like his pursuits, is pretty well known over the college; and if you ask what kind of man Jones is, you will probably hear, "Oh, he's rather a jolly fellow: plays a good hand at whist. He seems to have plenty of coin." "And Brown?" "He's a slow man: nobody knows him, you know: always mooning about Magdalen Walk." "And what sort of a fellow is Robinson?" "He'll be in the boat for certain: he was stroke of the Radley eight, and a splendid oar, they say." So easily is a reputation earned! At St. Chrys'tom's intellectual superiority was not so often talked about, except among the Dons, as a man's skill as an oar or a cricketer; but occasionally you might hear that Vincent was a "cheese" in composition, and was a safe first in "Mods," or that Taylor might take an easy second in "Greats," if he would but read. Men's positions and qualifications being thus known in college, Paul Romaine's poverty was not likely to remain a secret. The men who called on him saw at once, from the

character of his rooms and their furniture, that he was not a college Crœsus; but to allow of no misunderstanding, Paul usually told such men as he chose to speak to beyond the mere common-places of civility, that he was a poor man. He was not proud of his poverty, but he was too proud to allow men to think he was ashamed of it; so he told them of it at once, with a sort of grim satisfaction. Most of the men who had called on Paul, and who were quite the ordinary stamp of young men—mere raw material, with very little stuff in them—these were rather puzzled by his manners.

"He's a queer dry sort of card, that Romaine," said M'Anstie, the stroke of the St. Chrys'tom's eight; "he says no end of rum things, half of which I don't see; but then I don't go in for that sort of thing."

"I'll tell you what, Mac," said Anderson, another of the crew, "he's got precious muscles in those long arms of his, or I'm much mistaken: we must have him in the boat."

"Yes, if he'll pull; but the scholars generally want to read, and won't take to boating. However, if he'll come, I'll turn out Rogers, and put in Romaine in his place."

"What! turn out melancholy Jacques? No, that'll never do, Mac; why, man, he's one of the best oars in the boat."

"Yes, but he's such a gloomy beggar," said M'Anstie, "always by himself, or growling out something or other, unlike everybody else."

"Never mind that, old fellow," replied Anderson, in whose rooms this talk took place. "When he's in the boat, melancholy Rogers pulls like grim death, and we can't spare him. There'll be a vacancy soon; only mind you bottle Romaine all right."

CHAPTER IV.

A LITTLE BIT OF OXFORD "STILL-LIFE."

By a somewhat similar law of Nature, I suppose, as that by which water finds its own level, certain persons always drop down into the groove which is intended for them, and go on sliding in that groove through life. Mr. Henry Chunter, guided by this law of Nature, very soon became merged in the fastest set in college—a set of men who prided themselves on the wine which they drank, the cigars which they smoked, and the loo which they played. They were fond of confessing that they never read; they managed to shuffle through the college lectures in some way or other, getting up their work with a "crib" five minutes before the lecture time, and absenting themselves whenever it could possibly be done. In the Schools, these worthies contributed largely to the number of "ploughs" which attend every examination, and were in consequence regarded by the Dons with an evil eye: they were rich men, however, as a rule, or they would not have been tolerated; but they did the college good with their money, while they did it harm in a hundred other ways. The eyes of authority were fixed closely on them nevertheless; and when any of the set were actually caught tripping, "the quality of mercy" did not appear in his case. The chief

leaders of this set were Stropper, Clinton, Hawkins, and Devereux; and it was in the last gentleman's rooms that a large wine-party had assembled, on the night of the fifth of November. Devereux's rooms were some of the largest and best in college. The oak panels were covered with handsome prints, chiefly representing dogs, horses, and sporting scenes. A man's tastes may be roughly though pretty accurately arrived at by looking at his pictures, at Oxford. Over the mantel-piece, on which were carved figures of the four Evangelists, appeared somewhat incongruously, a rack filled with hunting-whips, fishing-rods, two pairs of boxing-gloves, and some single-sticks. Round a long table, on which were set three or four kinds of wine, in large quantities, with such dessert as the season afforded, some eighteen or twenty men were seated, some few lounging on the sofa and easy-chairs by the fire. Among this company were Henry Chunter, Percy Cheyne, and Paul Romaine. The first two were already acknowledged members of "The Phlegethon Club," as they called themselves: Paul had been invited by Devereux, who found it politic to see what freshmen were like, especially what their purses were like.

Few things are more utterly slow and stupid than an Oxford "wine" at its commencement. The men don't talk, or if they do, only in jerky sentences; every faculty is merged in drinking: the larger the party the more dull its opening proceedings. As the wine is drunk, however, conversation begins, and now the opposite extreme is arrived at. Every one talks at once, and the loudest and most persistent has the best audience. "Chaff," that quality in which young England, and especially young Oxford, excels, begins to flow freely; puns more or less incomprehensible are made: each

attempt being followed by loud cries of "Turn him out!" "Open the window, some fellow: it's really too oppressive!" Paul didn't say much, being a stranger to nearly all the men present, who didn't trouble to introduce themselves. Devereux, the host, a pale effeminate man, with drooping suspicious-looking eyes, said a few polite common-places, and then Paul was left to "eat, drink," and "be merry" if he could.

"I tell you what, Stropper," said Devereux presently, "this port isn't half bad: let's have some mulled."

"All right," said Stropper laconically, and went on with his figs.

Loud shouts of "William!" now re-echoed through the quad, till a scout arrived; not, however, before many interjections in the shape of "Hang that beggar, why doesn't he come?" had been lavished on the night air. William came at last, and departed with two bottles of fine "old crusted port" to the common-room, where it was to be converted into a hot, spiced, and very potent liquor.

"Do you think there'll be any row? it's town and gown, you know;" asked Percy Cheyne.

"Oh no! it's quite gone out of late: there's no lark at all now," said Clinton.

"They seem to keep it up more at Cambridge, I fancy."

"Yes, because they've got those bargee fellows, and they're devils to fight. Besides, they are not half so sharp down upon you there as they are up here; their Proctors are a mere joke to ours."

"I hope there will be a row to-night, though," continued Percy Cheyne. "I want to see a good town and gown."

"There might be: it's all chance. If lots of 'Varsity men

go out there's pretty sure to be a mill somewhere," said Clinton.

"Well, I'll tell you what, you fellows," said Mr. Chunter, who was somewhat red in the face and husky in speech, "if any c-cad c-comes humbugging us he'll get it h-hot, so I tell you."

A roar of laughter greeted this direful threat, and Mr. Chunter's next neighbour patted him violently on the back in return for his "plucky sentiments:" a proceeding which caused that gentleman to cough in a very violent and uncomfortable manner.

"Shall you fight, Stropper, old boy?" asked Hawkins of his companion.

"No, I think I shall run away," said Stropper.

This was received with another laugh, for Stropper was the acknowledged buffoon of the party. He was a stout short man, with a white unwholesome face, plentifully garnished with pimples, a little straggling moustache which seemed to be affected with some indecision as to what colour it should be, and an eyeglass, which invariably fell out of his eye as soon as it was put in. Paul Romaine looked at the puny figure of Mr. Chunter, and the more developed though equally ungainly frame of Mr. Stropper, and as he looked could not conceal the contempt and dislike which every well-bred man instinctively feels when thrown into the society of a snob. No one, however, noticed Paul's curling lip, nor would they have cared about it had they seen it; but as for Paul himself, he felt supremely uncomfortable, and a wild desire seized him to kick out several of the company then and there, without any reason or cause being assigned: highly absurd conduct, of course; but then Paul was not yet one-and-twenty, had been

at Eton, and wasn't sufficiently strong in the stomach as yet to bear the nausea of snobbism.

"Listen!" said Clinton, when the mulled port had been duly drunk. "There's a bit of a row going on apparently: don't you hear the cads shouting? Let's go out and see what's up."

The suggestion was agreed to by several of the party, and hastily throwing on their caps and gowns—the latter tied securely round their waists by the long streamers which distinguish a commoner's gown from a scholar's—they sallied forth, ten or twelve strong, to the High Street, whence loud shouts and yells were proceeding.

Now a town and gown row at Oxford has been of late years a very tame affair; so that the anxious mothers and nervous relatives generally, who picture their darling returning with two black eyes, a damaged nose, or perhaps a broken head, resulting from a series of spirited encounters with gigantic and pot-valiant townsmen, really agitate themselves needlessly in most instances; as the fighting is very small, and the row mainly consists of yelling, hooting, swearing, squeezing, and rushing madly up and down the various streets, till a descent of the Proctors or special constables occurs, and weeds out a few of the principal offenders among the gownsmen and the town. Occasionally, however, there is a good deal of hard fighting; and as that part of the community known as "The Town" knows no mercy or rules of warfare, any unfortunate University man who happens to be caught alone, or to be knocked down, stands a very good chance of being killed, unless rescued in time by his brethren. Such was the case some few years ago, when two Wadham men were caught by the mob as they were returning quietly from a friend's room, and

being overpowered by the manly town (the odds being about fifty to two), one of them, in consequence of the kicks of his foes, got a concussion of the brain, and I believe died from the injury which he received.

It chanced that on this particular fifth of November, the fiery zeal of the *ignobile vulgus* had waxed very warm; and as many University men, mostly flushed with wine, had also come out, a really good row was anticipated. This became evident to the party of which Paul made one, as they entered the High near St. Mary's Church. The town had mustered very strong, and were continually raising their gathering cry of "Town, Town!" Troups of very rough-looking fellows were standing at every corner, and blocking up the pavement, making remarks of a highly objectionable character on passing University men.

"They'll make a rush directly," said one of Paul's party. "Keep in a line and let's break through. Hold on to my arm, Romaine."

So saying, and forming a line which stretched across the pavement, they proceeded up the High. Not far, however; for the few stragglers who were shoved out of the way retreated to the main body of the town with loud shouts, and just as they arrived beneath the ugly walls of All Saints' Church, a loud shout of "Town, Town! Give it 'em!" was followed by a furious charge on the part of the crowd. In a minute our friends loosened arms, and cleared for action. Down came the cads, shouting and swearing as is their wont, nd were confronted by Hawkins, Clinton, Curzon, and Paul Romaine, the rest closing up behind. Hawkins, a huge, burly man with red whiskers, sent one irate townsman reeling among his friends, by one blow well planted in the chest.

The next moment Paul was swept away from his companions, and struggling alone among the crowd. The situation was a novel one; but Paul was not only as bold as a lion, but loved fighting as well as any Irishman at Donnybrook Fair. So throwing back the large sleeves of his scholar's gown, which cramped his movements, he planted his back against the railings of All Saints', and glared fiercely on the crowd, who were plunging and surging around him. He saw they were cowards, and knew that numbers were all he had to fear. A smart blow on the cap from a stick showed him that the onset had begun; so, metaphorically speaking, he drew his sword, and threw away the scabbard, and turning on his cowardly assailant, threw out one of his long muscular arms, and catching the hero of the stick full upon the lower jaw, landed him safely in the road with a crash which was sufficiently audible to all. The first blow, like the first taste of blood, animates to fresh onslaught; so now Paul's long arms went out true and straight from the shoulder, and usually did some execution. Though he kept his back well up to the railings, and managed to keep his foes from getting in at his face, yet it was hot work, and Paul found himself getting exhausted, when on his tingling ears smote the welcome cry of "Gown, Gown, to the rescue!" and back went the mob right and left, as a strong detachment of St. Chrys'tom's men, headed by Percy Cheyne, charged in among them.

"Well done, Romaine! I saw you warming the cads," cried Percy, as he seized our friend's arm, "Come along! there's a jolly row in the Turl, and they want help."

Down Turl Street they went, fighting their way through the crowd with some difficulty, and arrived before the gates of Lincoln, where a strong stand was being made by the town.

As they rushed forward to the scene of action, a blow from behind knocked Paul's cap over his eyes, and he might have fared ill in this momentary dilemma; but Percy Cheyne catching the aggressor, a red-nosed ostler, by the neck, and exerting a sudden effort of strength, pitched him suddenly among his friends with so much violence that he fell helpless, and didn't seem in a hurry to rise again. Paul, with his gown torn and his cap battered, was again separated from his companions; for his impetuous nature led him to forget the great secret of a town and gown fight, viz., to keep all together. The short separation, however, was fruitful in an adventure which afterwards led to many important events in the young man's career. He was going along with the crowd, occasionally exchanging a blow or two, but mostly carried along with the stream, when his indignant eye beheld a University man leaning against the wall at the top of Brasenose Lane, hardly beset by three cads, and evidently much exhausted. He was striving to guard himself from their united attack, his cap was off, and his head and face were bloody. Dashing forward, and totally reckless as to consequences, Paul threw himself like a large cricket-ball into the group, and shouting in no gentle voice, "You infernal cowards!" dealt the foremost of the assailant so cruel a blow in the face as to stretch him bleeding and cursing in the kennel. The other two held off at the sight of Paul's long arms and dark passionate face, and he was enabled to join the gownsman, who was pale and exhausted, and who staggered as he tried to pick up h s broken cap.

"I'm afraid you're hurt," said Paul. "Have the blackguards done you any harm?"

"I think my head's rather queer," answered his new friend.

"I don't feel quite right on my legs: one cad hit me with a life-preserver, I think."

"Infernal coward!" muttered Paul, again. "Can I do anything for you? I shall be delighted to help you."

"Thanks! if you would help me down to Christ Church I should be very much obliged, for I really don't think I can walk alone."

He staggered again as he spoke, and Paul almost feared he would faint. Taking his arm, the Christ Church man said: "You can keep off the cads well enough, I think: you gave that beggar no end of a crack just now."

"Oh! we shall do very well," said Paul, cheerfully. "See! the crowd's clearing off: the Proctors are coming, I expect."

It was even so. As they emerged again into the High, the velvet sleeves and white bands of the Senior Proctor were visible among the broken crowd, his bull-dogs being busily occupied in collecting the gownsmen about him, all of whom were being sent back to college, and some delivering up their names and colleges with a view to a further enquiry. Paul and his companions reached Christ Church without molestation; for the Junior Proctor was abroad in St. Old's, the street leading down to Christ Church, and the fighting was quelled.

"I'm awfully obliged to you for coming with me," said the Christ Church man, when Paul had safely landed him in his rooms in Peckwater Quad. "I shall go to bed, for I feel very seedy after this knocking about. Will you come and breakfast with me to-morrow at nine? then we can talk over our adventures. Ask for Challoner's rooms, if you don't recollect the way."

Paul accepted the invitation, and went back to college none the worse for his fighting, and very well pleased at his last

achievement. All the rest of the party with whom Paul had started had before this retired to their rooms. Their prowess had not been of an extensive order, though some of them were loud in their own praises. Mr. Henry Chunter's behaviour had been of the very mildest and most unheroic character. He had, being urged by his friends, attacked a very small cad, who, so far from succumbing to his might, had made Mr. Chunter's nose bleed, and otherwise greatly discomposed him. Stropper, after having his eye-glass broken by a democratic bargee of ferocious aspect, had retired into a shop, and thence to college with all convenient haste. So the town and gown fight ended, with a few broken windows, and a few broken heads, a great deal of noise, and very little glory.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH MRS. CHUNTER ISSUES CARDS OF INVITATION.

THE Chunters were not aristocratic people: they were not of the stuff from which the *élite* of society is formed, although some very raw material is occasionally worked up into that service. But the Chunters were better than aristocratic, they were rich. Where the money came from no one exactly knew, except perhaps Mr. Chunter himself: besides having enough to provide amply the brown holland and bread and cheese of domestic life, there was enough also for the *amenities* of life, that is to say, its extravagances and follies. If Mrs. Chunter had any passion beyond a dull, dissatisfied, mournful want of something, it was a passion for "fine friends." To have well-known people in her house in Sloane Street was to have balm to her usually wounded sensibility: to hear of titled personages as being about to attend one of her numerous assemblies was to be happy; that is, to be a little less dismal and a little more exigent than usual.

And so it was that the Chunters were always planning and arranging parties of the most heterogeneous character. Young Candytuft, of the War Office, once called them "Chunter's Choice Mixture," and the saying was thought good—for the War Office. The secret of these miscellaneous assemblies was

that there were two elements at work in their construction: the one element being Mr. Chunter, who insisted on bringing some of his city and other friends; and Mrs. Chunter, who discharged into her rooms whatever notable fish her ever-extended net might have captured. So it came about that their grand assemblies were made up of the most opposite and often most antagonistic elements. What the chief object of the Chunters was in having these parties is doubtful: as far as was visible to the eye they attained no object at all: their daughters were not married, at all events. Perhaps they courted fame and notoriety: if so, they got it; but of what kind?

"Mr. Chunter," said the lady of that name to her husband, as they sat together after dinner, "I think next Tuesday will be the best day for our *conversazione*."

"Very well, my dear," says Mr. Chunter, who is sleepy after his wine, "just as you please."

"That's always the way with you when I want your advice and assistance, Mr. Chunter," maunders his wife; "you will *not* show any interest in *anything* that I arrange, or plan, or think of, but just hang like a dead weight, and— Oh dear me! I wonder why I, who am all sensibility, ever married a man who has none."

"Why, gently, my dear! a man may feel a bit drowsy without being accused of having no feelings."

"Feelings, Mr. Chunter! Yes, feelings for self! very likely you have; who has not? How well did the gifted woman, Mrs. Melancthon M'Klavery, express the ruling power of selfishness! she said—"

"O bother Mrs. Melancthon M'Klavery! what about your party?" interrupted Mr. Chunter, impatiently.

"Oh, never mind, ne-ver mind!" said his wife, in a measured and resigned tone, as though she said: "I am resigned: the martyr's crown is mine as a dead certainty. Go on, I can bear it."

"Come, come, Maria, no more of this nonsense!" says Mr. Chunter, assuming his right to threaten and command; "if you mean to have the thing at all you had better consult me at once, or I'll end the whole concern."

Short and fat men, when excited, are not pleasant objects to look upon: Mr. Chunter was no exception to the rule. But his wife was far too skilful a strategist to charge upon this provocation. She became on the instant "like Niobe, all tears," and ejaculated plaintively: "Ah well, well! this can't last long;" and so cried on. Mr. Chunter fidgeted a little, swore a little, and finally was obliged to conciliate his wife in an abject manner; in which operation he looked as unlike a "lord of the creation," as you can well imagine.

"Who have you asked, my dear?" said the humbled Chunter presently.

"Why, I scarcely know," answered the lady, who by this time was back again to low-water mark. "There are a few new people of importance. Professor Smeltz is one: he has invented a machine for composing music by steam, and is a most accomplished creature, I believe. Then Mrs. Melancthon M'Klavery writes to tell me that she has some new views on the operation of the human mind in unweaned infants, which can't fail to interest every one; and Doctor Thudichum, the great education reformer, has promised to come; and I have some hopes that Count Aspinello, the revolutionary writer of Italy, *may* come; but his time is much occupied, and he is an object of suspicion to many enemies."

"I don't wonder at that," said Mr. Chunter. "If he goes exciting people to rebel, he can't expect to be very much liked by the aristocracy, I should think."

"Mrs. Cavash will come for certain," continued Mrs. Chunter; "and Doctor Chiseler, the spirit-medium, will be a great attraction: people are running after him immensely just now."

"The more fools they!" muttered Mr. Chunter, by way of interjection.

The important Tuesday arrived in due course, and the houses in Sloane Street, near the Chunter mansion, were aware that a party was in progress there. There was the usual bustle of carriages and cabs, the usual surly chaff among the drivers, the usual stolid policemen, and the usual sprinkling of street boys to watch the proceedings. Unwholesome-looking men in sickly dirty-white neckcloths stood about in the hall and on the stairs, to usher in the company; and one who was perhaps the most unwholesome-looking of them all, but who happened to possess a loud voice, stood at the drawing-room door and shouted the names of the arrivals, with a stentorian tone and a look of utter indifference. A more strangely mixed assembly you would scarcely find than that which was now squeezing, pushing, talking, and lounging in the somewhat cramped space of the Chunters' drawing-rooms. You could see they were *lions* at a glance. There was the literary lion, with the conventional beard and moustache, without which no one can write well now-a-days, as everybody knows. There he was, looking, or trying to look, quite ordinary, and making a very poor effort to appear as though he didn't know that Mrs. Chunter was pointing him out as "the well-known Mr. Soper, of the *Conservative Beacon*."

Close by, and eyeing the Conservative Soper with dark malevolence in his look, was Mr. Lilburne Smith, of the *Free Speaker*, a Radical paper which had gone through more actions for libel than any existing publication. Doctor Rufus Cromwell was there, fresh from America, full of new views on liberty and the evils of monarchy; and in his train were two extremely seedy-looking individuals, supposed to be American poets, though no one had ever heard of any of their works. "The galaxy of talent and sparkling wit," as the editor of the *Conservative Beacon* called it in his next day's account of the proceedings, was centred round Dr. Thudichum, the great educationalist. At the feet of this Gamaliel were placed Mrs. Melancthon M'Klavery, Miss Dribin, and others of the strong-minded class—that terrible order of beings who never seem to have been young, but who must have been born at once into a state of dryness, hardness, loud-voicedness, and spectacles. Dr. Thudichum himself was a large portly man, with a deep sonorous voice, a ponderous manner of speaking, and a massive pair of gold spectacles, which he waved to and fro when delivering his oracular responses, in a manner which he supposed to be overpowering. He always spoke as from a pulpit; never for an instant forgetting that he was an educator, and that it was his duty to lecture mankind in general. When he considered a sufficient number of auditors were gathered round him, Dr. Thudichum raised his gold eye-glasses, and commenced one of his pompous harangues something in this fashion:

"The subject of education, properly so called, is a subject *sui generis*, all-important, all-absorbing, demanding the—a—the deepest, and—a—the profoundest attention from the philanthropist, the scholar—in a word, the man. It is a

mistake to suppose that education can be picked up: nothing is picked up but bad money and bad habits. Education must be made the centre of a system. Everything and everybody forms the centre of some system or other: education is the centre of the greatest of all systems, civilization. I may speak as it were *ex cathedrâ*, being myself an educator, the centre of a system—the solar system, so to speak—of education. I have begun *ab ovo:* I have studied the man in his puerile and in his juvenescent state. I have seen that truly 'the child is father to the man;' that as the child is, so the man is; even as the Laureate has told us, 'As the husband is, the wife is.' I have seen that one thing alone developes the embryo into a man: one thing educates, draws out—*educo*, I draw out—the mind of the youthful subject, whether the boy, *ingenui vultus puer*, or the youth, *imberbis*, as yet innocent of the razor; and that one thing is a proper style of teaching—a teaching founded on a system; one which softens the manners, *emollit mores*, while it strengthens the mind, making a man to be a man in every sense of the word, and fulfilling the old saying of William of Wyckham, 'Manners make the man.'" And so on for half an hour.

Among the lions of the evening there were to be found some smaller specimens, who didn't seem particularly comfortable in the society in which they found themselves. Among these was little Candytuft of the War Office, who was considerably out of humour, having been seized upon and victimized by Mrs. Melancthon M'Klavery on the subject of Female Parliaments. As for Mr. and Mrs. Chunter, nobody took any notice of them: Mrs. Chunter spoke dismally to people, who wondered what was the matter with her; and Miss Honoria, having used up the Italian Count who wrote

revolutionary letters, with a long flirtation, yawned and turned her back upon the company. Finally, the company turned their backs upon the Chunter mansion, and departed, east, west, north, and south, to sing of their own greatness and condescension, and of the snobbishness and want of breeding of the Chunters. Such is what people gain by giving parties! When will the world grow wise enough to learn that giving expensive entertainments, inviting a crowd of people who are strangers to one another, lighting many lamps, and consuming many ices, does not buy that rare article Friendship, or promote the growth of that tender plant Charity, which "vaunteth not herself, is not puffed up?" The Chunters did not learn it, and I wonder how many of my readers have done so.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE READER RETURNS TO OXFORD.

On the morning after the town and gown fight, Paul Romaine visited his new acquaintance, Challoner of Christ Church, and found him looking rather pale, but otherwise unmarked by his recent rough handling. Paul, as he stood by the fire in Challoner's rooms, formed a striking contrast to his host, who was slightly made, with delicately-formed features, and a face such as women like better to look on than men. If there really be such a thing as an intellectual look, Frank Challoner certainly possessed it; nor was the look the only thing in his case: he was acknowledged in Christ Church to be the best man of his year, had already taken a high class in moderations, and was now reading for honours at his degree. There was much frankness and gentlemanly bearing in his manner towards Paul; but with it there was a slight shade of restraint and haughtiness which was instantly perceived by our all too sensitive friend.

It may seem absurd to dwell on this quality of sensitiveness in a man whom I have described as a great, strong, broad-chested fellow, a champion in a town fight, and altogether a rough diamond; but I know too much of him of whom I speak to err in this or any other particular. It is

not the pale-faced, drawing-room haunting, album scribbling sentimentalists, beloved of silly school-girls, who are sensitive; *they* are merely conceited fools: it is the man of highly-strung nature, of well-cultivated mind, who is really sensitive. Is it a virtue, then, to be sensitive? growls some Thersites of society. Certainly not: all joy to the thick-skinned ones, say I, on whose elephantine sides the arrows of sarcasm or malice fall harmless. You lose many a heart-ache, many a cruel pang, which your sensitive neighbours endure; but you lose, too, *some* blessings which belong only to a less dense nature, believe me. Paul felt the almost imperceptible hauteur of Challoner's greeting, and was cold as a stone in consequence.

"You came at a lucky moment for me, Romaine," said Challoner, when the scout had arranged a handsome and abundant breakfast on the table. "I believe those fellows would have pretty well-murdered me."

"I am glad to have rendered you any service: so slight a one needs no talking about, I fancy," said Paul.

Challoner looked up at the dark, rather stern-looking face of his companion, and, for a moment, regretted having come across so unsocial a man; but guessing, perhaps, the secret of the other's coldness, he continued: "Well, if they *had* done for me, I suppose there would have been a Rachel weeping somewhere or other, and refusing to be comforted; and yet I don't know——. However, it's as well as it is, for my sake, at all events."

The young man spoke almost bitterly, as if he doubted whether any one would have taken his loss very seriously to heart. Paul wondered in himself what this meant, but said nothing.

"How do you get on up here? Do you like Oxford?" asked Challoner presently.

"I should like it better if it rained less, and if more of the men of my standing were anything like companions," said Paul.

"You are unfortunate, then. It often happens that a set of men come up together, with scarcely one man among them who has anything in him. Then, till you get to know the senior men, it is very slow. Have many called on you yet?"

"No, scarcely any. They never do at St. Chrys'tom's, they tell me."

"Nor do they here much. It is a great mistake, though; many good friends are lost, and bad ones made, in this way. However, if you find it slow, I shall be very glad to see you when you've nothing better to do. Do you ride?"

"Not now," said Paul, shortly.

"Well, if you like to get a horse at Simmonds's, we can have some rides about: there are a few places worth seeing."

"Thanks, Challoner!" said Paul, whilst his face flushed deeply; "but I cannot afford such expensive luxuries as horses. I may as well tell you at once that I am poor. I am not ashamed to own what you would easily find out for yourself; and, to speak frankly, I fear that my poverty must keep me away from such pleasures as to you, or to any Christ Church man, are common enough."

"You mean that you won't come here again, if you can help it," said Challoner, smiling. "Now look here, Romaine! some men would say you wanted to be rude because you don't like me, and don't choose to know Christ Church men, who are supposed to be spendthrifts to a man; but I know better, or am sufficiently vain to think so. I fancy I know what

sort of fellow you are, and that we shall be very good friends when we know each other better. I have few friends up here from choice, though I am a senior man: if you like to be my friend, let us try how we agree, and if we don't pull together we can separate easily enough. Come, is it a bargain?"

It was a strange way of beginning a friendship; but the frank, blunt manner of the proposal pleased Paul better than another would have done, and he shook hands on the bargain, promising to walk and row with Challoner as often as he pleased.

The rain ceased its perpetual flow towards the end of November, and Paul and his new friend were able to "take their walks abroad." Often did they pass along the winding path skirting the Cherwell in Christ Church Meadow: the trees, beloved of summer visitors, were leafless now, and the brown leaves crackled under their feet; but youth has a summer-time ever blooming in its heart, and our two friends drew from their own light natures the sunshine which November refused to the sombre landscape. Many and varied were the subjects which they discussed, with all the ardour and enthusiasm and free-spoken boldness of youth.

It is a fashion, and, like many other fashions, a very foolish one, to imagine that Oxford men are mere roystering, careless, dare-devil fellows, incarnations of mischief, incapable of serious thought or conversation. Such a belief is, I know, common enough; but it is the mark of gross ignorance to entertain it. There are at Oxford, of course—and where are there not?—hundreds of such men, mere followers of animal instinct, "whose god is their belly," and who talk for ever of horses and dogs, and of worse things too, very often. There are men who are mere athletic machines, who can play cricket or

row admirably, and beyond this if weighed in the balance they are sure to be "found wanting." But these are only some of a large and mixed body. Where do all the brilliant scholars, the eloquent orators, the glorious poets, the earnest divines, come from, if Oxford is the "Castle of Indolence" which some people love to call it?

Few things could have exercised a better influence over Paul Romaine at this time than the society of Frank Challoner. I have hinted that our young friend Paul was inclined to be too self-reliant. Conscious of a powerful and vigorous intellect, and frequently thrown into the society of very inferior people, Paul was getting gradually on to a pedestal of his own rearing: he was becoming self-assertive, dogmatic, not conceited—a really clever man is seldom conceited—but proud of his own powers and contemptuous towards others. To have argued with or bullied Paul on this subject would infallibly have hardened his neck and made matters worse; but Challoner's good sense and clear unprejudiced views were exactly adapted to modify and tone down the more violent feelings of his friend. They were returning one afternoon from a walk to Sandford, along the banks of the Isis, and had started the *vexata quæstio* of Church parties.

"Why on earth should these parties exist at all?" asked Paul impatiently. "Why is it necessary for every man, woman, and child, who belongs to the Church to have some party name tacked on to their skirts? Mr. Brown is an Evangelical, and Mr. Smith is High Church, and Mr. Robinson is Broad Church, and somebody else is a Latitudinarian. Why cannot people be content to be Christians, without splitting up into these endless sects, and coining hard names of which they scarcely understand the meaning, to throw at some enemy's head?"

"If every one thought alike there would not be sects, of course," answered Challoner; "but you see you can't make every one take a universal standard of faith. Even among the apostles you know there were people who gave their vote for Paul, and others for Apollos. I quite agree with you in thinking that there is too much sectarianism in the Church, too great a love for party names and badges; but I don't see how it's to be avoided."

"Well, I haven't got a remedy cut and dried, I confess," said Paul; "but I should have very strong objections to swear by the Church as the purest and best of institutions while it consists of so many discordant elements. But what I chiefly find fault with is the branding of good and excellent men with opprobrious names, just because they refuse to go to heaven in the particular band-box provided by the sect which abuses them."

"What an irreverent beggar you are, Romaine!" said Challoner, laughing: "but to what men do you particularly refer?"

"Oh, I can give you plenty of instances. Here in Oxford more than anywhere else we have this miserable narrow-mindedness continually before our eyes. The other day I was talking to that humbug Betterton, of our College, about the Greek Professor. Of course I was praising the Professor, as every one must who knows anything of his scholarship, and his kindness to the men who consult him, and what do you think Betterton said on the matter?"

"I think I can guess," replied Challoner; "he said he was unsound, I suppose."

"Exactly," answered Paul indignantly. "Unsound, indeed! what does a fellow like Betterton know of unsound-

ness? What *is* unsoundness? I should like to know. A dislike to take for granted everything that every one chooses to tell us, just because he can write himself priest."

"But, my dear fellow," said Challoner, quietly smiling at his friend's angry outbreak, "you must have heard that the Professor is looked on as a dangerous teacher, who does not hold to the Scriptures in their integrity."

"Well, what of that? If study and examination have made him find inaccuracies, would you have him go on believing blindly? You should have been a Romanist, Challoner; these are just the sentiments for a monk."

"Don't be in too great a hurry, *mon ami*. I don't think I said those were my sentiments," was Challoner's answer. "I only said the world had certain doubts about the Professor's orthodoxy."

"The world!" echoed Paul, contemptuously—"a very fit judge of such a man! But the world at large doesn't condemn him; it's only a clique of narrow-minded bigots who like to call hard names, because they're *Christians*, forsooth! I wonder if they ever read the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee."

"Has it ever occurred to you, Romaine, that you are as great a bigot in your worship of the Professor and certain other of your heroes as these very people whom you condemn so violently? You will say that you are but defending an injured man; but, my dear fellow, you are as violent a partisan as any of the pious ones whom you love to pitch into; and, if I were you, I'd cut that obstinate style of forming opinions, and then sticking to them through thick and thin."

"If I'm wrong, I hope I'm not such a fool as to hold out

against sound argument," answered Paul; "but I haven't been convinced yet. Besides, here's another shot for you, Challoner: the University is glad enough to let the Professor teach Greek for £40 a year, but yet won't give him a proper salary because of his views. Now, tell me if this is your idea of justice; because it isn't mine."

"No," said Challoner, "I agree with you there: if Oxford employs a Greek Professor it ought to pay him fairly. But we must adjourn our argument, for here's Tom Tower, and it's just time for hall, so good night."

The winter term drew to a close, but its last days were days of anxiety to many a freshman in Oxford. The trying ordeal of "Smalls," the first examination—called by the dons "Responsions," and by mild freshmen "Little-go"—began early in December; and a goodly list of names, printed in Latin, appeared upon each college gate, announcing the "*Ordo Respondentium.*" Among these were some of our friends: "Chunter, Henricus, e Coll. S. Chrys.; Romaine, Paulus, e Coll. S. Chrys."

Mr. Paul felt very little uneasiness about the examination, as he was well up in the preliminary subjects required, nor was he constitutionally nervous, a weakness which ruins many a promising man when subjected to the trying ordeal of the Schools.

On the first day of "Smalls," Paul found himself one of about three hundred men who loitered about the wide quadrangle of the Schools, all wearing white ties, and many with still whiter faces. They were waiting for the Schools to open; St. Mary's clock was just on the stroke of half-past nine, and then the examination would begin. There are few more unpleasant things than waiting for any examination, but

especially your first, in the Schools' quadrangle at Oxford, particularly if it be when the shrill December wind is sweeping along, and singing its mournful tune among the dark archways. There you may see all kinds of faces, wearing every kind of expression. The burly whiskered boating-man, knowing very little of his subjects perhaps, but careless and jovial to the last. The quiet, prim, reading-man, conscious of his safe pass, talking calmly with his friends. Here is a little knot of shady men, whom the college has reluctantly sent up, entertaining small hopes of their getting through: see how they cluster together, and speculate whether the first paper will be arithmetic or Latin prose! Here comes a late man, with his gown in ribbons, and his cap smashed; his face betrays the memory of a noisy "wine" last night, and his head aches "consumedly," we may venture to assert. Now that the doors are open, the A's and B's and all the first half of the alphabet go into one large School, the second half are drafted off to another. Little dreary isolated deal tables, each furnished with an uncomfortable chair, are placed in long rows up and down the room. The name of each man is affixed to the tables, and he seats himself before a quantity of blue foolscap paper, two new quill pens, and an ink-bottle.

Presently the candidates become aware of certain Dons walking about with their crimson hoods on over their gowns, and distributing the papers of questions. This done, they mount into elevated seats which overlook the proceedings, call over the names of the candidates, and keep a bright look-out for copyists: if any one be caught in this unfair attempt to answer his paper, brief and stern is his sentence. Down pounces the examiner, like Nemesis, tears up his papers, and expels him from the Schools, not to enter them again till the next examination, some months hence.

For two days, Paul and the other St. Chrys'tom's men in whom we are interested went through this "paper work," as it is called; then began the *vivâ voce* examination, to which every candidate is subjected for part of one day.

The men are examined in alphabetical order, so that Percy Cheyne and Henry Chunter came on before Paul. Percy Cheyne passed easily, as every one expected; but when the friends of Mr. Henry Chunter went for his *testamur*—the certificate of his having passed—lo! there was none; so that the words of a certain Oxford rhyme were verified in his case:

> "When they went for his *testamur*,
> A mourning voice was heard in Ramah,
> A sound of woe and wailing loud,
> And Rachel wept because her son was ploughed!"

Yes! Mr. Henry Chunter was ploughed. He had declared himself fully competent to *floor* the papers, and had every chance given him by the examiners; but having proved himself totally incapable of construing an easy chorus from Euripides, and having filled the Odes of Horace with false quantities, the examiners—that much-enduring race—were compelled to pluck, or, as the painful operation is now called, plough him.

It is an exciting moment, that waiting for the *testamur* at the door of the School. The clerk of the Schools, a stolid individual, conscious of the importance of his operations, comes at length to a little doorway, where some twenty or thirty men are crowding and squeezing, and begins to read out in alphabetical order the names inscribed on some little mean-looking strips of blue paper. Each *testamur* is seized as the name is read, a shilling paid for it, and it is carried off

in triumph by the friends of the lucky man. Many an anxious mother, many a grey-haired father miles away, will be made happy with the sight of that scrap of paper. Truly may we affirm that no shillings are ever so cheerfully paid during a man's university career as that which he expends on his *testamur*. Paul Romaine had the satisfaction of receiving *his* one frosty day near Christmas time, and soon after was speeding alone in the train for Inglefell.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTMAS AT INGLEFELL.

THE snow was lying crisp and white round Inglefell Cottage when Paul Romaine returned. How eagerly had the mother and sister been expecting him! what raptures were gone into when his big form was actually inside the room! He had grown even in two months, Mrs. Romaine was sure of it: he was more manly than ever: he was everything, short of perfection. Pretty little Maude, as she drew her tall brother down within kissing distance, fancied in her little heart of hearts that Paul was colder and graver than formerly, and she guessed, with a woman's ready wit, that he had learnt more and harder lessons at Oxford than those which are expounded in a lecture-room. But if there were deeper shades on Paul's face, they brightened away into smiles at the cheery talk of his mother and sister, as they sat by the blazing fireside in the winter nights. What mattered it that the fireplace was small, and that the furniture which was reddened by the firelight was commonplace and cheap? Was not that fireside better than a palace where such contentment and domestic love are not?

Believe me, you who are fond of roving and "wandering to and fro in the earth," and who sneer at home pleasures as *slow*

and a *bore;* believe me, there is no such joy in life, go where you will, do what you list, as the fireside hours of a united and loving family. I know very well that I am writing a truism, a very stale truism indeed; but truths or truisms, call them what you will, are generally the last things listened to, and the least regarded: men are in such a hurry in this working-day world that, like Pilate, they ask, "What is truth?" and will not wait for an answer.

No doubt our friends at Inglefell were of a very sluggish, unexcitable temperament, or they would never have been really happy in a small, poorly furnished cottage room, whilst the recollection of a large and handsome house was still in their memory. Where was their pride? was it not wounded by the change? How did they manage to put up with all the inconveniences of such a fall in life? I know not: all I know is that they *were* happy, or they were most arch-dissemblers, and that Maude's face was as bright as a rose-leaf, and yet, for aught I know, she may have washed with yellow soap, and never gone to the expense of violet powder. If Paul felt occasionally savage and moody and discontented at the many disagreeable hints which poverty was always giving him, not a shadow of this sort crossed his path during Christmas-time at Inglefell. In the morning there was a walk in the cold bright air with his mother or Maude, who listened with the greatest attention to his Oxford stories. Women are always good listeners: they can endure an almost interminable piece of prosing from their female friends about "my Harry," or "poor John's misfortunes," or "baby's illness:" so Paul's stories were eagerly listened to; and he being fresh from Oxford, with all the bloom on the subject yet intact, his stories were generally pleasant. There were others, perhaps,

but he kept them in the background. We know well enough that "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

There were a few visitors occasionally at the cottage: the most regular of them was Tom Benson, of whom we heard something formerly.

A thoroughly good honest fellow was Tom. Not brilliant; but then brilliant men are too much like champagne, when the cork has been out for a little, they become singularly flat and useless. Your sound table-beer is, after all, better than the brilliant champagne; it doesn't get flat half so soon, and can always be depended on. Tom Benson was eminently good-natured: you could see it in his round good-looking face, and merry bashful eyes. He must have been good-natured, or why did he come over so often to Inglefell Cottage—no very lively retreat for a dashing young partner in a bank—and sit for an hour chatting with Mrs. Romaine alone, if Maude happened to be out, and for longer still if she happened to be at home? One morning Tom Benson arrived, and was delighted to find that Paul was down from Oxford.

"I've just come in the nick of time," said Tom Benson, when he had shaken hands for the third time with Paul. "There's to be a ball at Grey Abbots next week, and you must persuade Mrs. Romaine and Miss Mau——Miss Romaine to come, you really must, old fellow."

"I don't fancy they'll come, Benson," said Paul; "but I'll back your invitation: so let us go in and attack the outworks at once."

How pretty Maude looked, to be sure, with the most becoming bit of blue ribbon in her hair, and a little blush on her cheek when Tom Benson came in, looking, it must be confessed, rather sheepish. Mrs. Romaine shook her head when Tom mentioned the ball.

"I have given up those kind of things, now," she said quietly.

"But, my dear Mrs. Romaine, it would do you all the good in the world, and Miss Romaine too: I'm sure of it," urged honest Tom, waxing quite eloquent on the theme. "You have had nothing to amuse you for a long time, and now Paul is at home to take care of you, you ought to go out a little."

"I think it would do you good, mother," said Paul. "You and Maude must not become hermits, you know; and you like many of the people of Grey Abbots who will be there."

"I should like you and Maude to have the pleasure, certainly," answered Mrs. Romaine, thinking of herself last, as mothers always do; "and so I think we will go, Mr. Benson, and thank you very much for wishing it."

"Not at all, not at all," said Tom, as fast as he could get out the words. "It's next Thursday, remember."

"Does Benson come over here often?" asked Paul, when honest Tom had taken his departure.

"O yes! very often; isn't it good of him? he says he fears we're dull," answered little Maude, whose eyes were all the brighter at the thought of the ball; "but we're not the least dull; you know, dear, we have always lots to do, and your letters are something to expect and look forward to. I wonder, though, that Mr. Benson cares to come over and talk to two ladies: he must find it very dull, I should think."

Paul looked at his mother and smiled, and she returned the smile. *They* did not wonder that Tom Benson liked to come to Inglefell so often: only silly little Maude was ignorant of the reason.

Before the next week Paul heard that the Chunters were staying at Grey Abbots; they had come to spend a week with

their dear friend, Mrs. Arkwright, and they were, of course, coming to the ball.

Thursday arrived, and Paul escorted his mother and sister to Grey Abbots. There were all the usual characteristics of a country ball to be found in the present entertainment. There were the *belles* of the county surrounded by a crowd of admirers, there was the usual assortment of pretty girls and common-place girls, and there were the inevitable dowdy daughters who always crop up in these entertainments, who are plain, and of whom only a few have the good sense not to mind it. To say that Maude Romaine was the finest and handsomest girl in the room would not be true; and in this true history we cannot afford to lean ever so slightly to the side of exaggeration. We know that Maude was not *fine* at all, but small, and delicate, and retiring. Paul, however, was not the only man who thought that night that Maude, in her white dress, with a single camellia in her hair, looked fresher and fairer than most of the girls who had got up their charms for the occasion with all that care and art could devise. Many a man in that crowded ball-room looked with pleasure on little Maude's blooming, pleasant face; and some envied Tom Benson, who had joined the Romaines immediately on their entry, and had begged for Maude's hand in the next dance.

The Chunter family was there in full force. Mr. Chunter, resplendent in a white waistcoat and diamond studs, was wedged into a corner, in company with a fat country squire and a still fatter apothecary, who left little room for a fourth comer. Mrs. Chunter, looking still more sad than usual, was watching the dashing Honoria, who, with scarlet flowers in her hair, which set off her dark complexion to great advantage,

was waltzing with Lieutenant Dashwood, of the Lancers, from Newhampton. Doubtless, Mrs. Chunter felt pleasure at the sight; for everybody knows that old Dashwood, of Lombard Street, is a millionaire, and the Lieutenant an only son. But where was Clara Chunter? Positively, talking to young Apsley, the Curate of St. Martin's, who doesn't care for dancing! Mrs. Chunter sighs as she sees her daughter sacrifice her opportunities thus.

In the train of the Chunters were two gentlemen who seemed to be ingratiating themselves rapidly with the company, and airing their London manners before the eyes of the natives. One of these gentlemen was Captain Halkett, who on a certain afternoon had escorted the Misses Chunter to the botanic *fête*; the other was the Captain's particular friend, Mr. Slingsby.

Very likely Paul Romaine was influenced by an unjustifiable prejudice, when he took a strong dislike to both these men at first sight; but he certainly *did* take a most decided antipathy to both. Captain Halkett was the better looking man of the two: a tall thin figure, with a pale face, and very black curling whiskers and moustache, which shone as though recently black-leaded and polished like a stove. He was always styled Captain, though in what regiment he had served was not exactly known; he had, however, been abroad for many years, and was *most* entertaining, the ladies said, in his stories of foreign parts. On the present occasion he was swaggering among the fair dames of Grey Abbots and the neighbourhood, and was talking volubly and apparently very successfully. Mr. Slingsby, the Captain's friend, was a short, cadaverous man, with a pair of small reddish eyes which twinkled under very bushy eyebrows; his hair was wiry and foxy in hue, and

had left the back of his head bare, while in front it grew down over a low, wrinkled forehead. Mr. Slingsby was said to be an attorney, but he had not practised much of late; perhaps there were good reasons for his abstaining. He always spoke in a low hissing tone, and always agreed with everybody. His chief occupation at the ball seemed to be watching other people with his keen little eyes, and his friend Captain Halkett came in for a large share of Mr. Slingby's attention.

Little Maude enjoyed herself immensely, and though she did not dance very often, in order that her mother might not seem neglected, yet she had her full share of the polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, and the rest, which followed each other in rapid succession.

Mr. Henry Chunter claimed acquaintance with Paul, and was very coldly received by that gentleman. Tom Benson, however, introduced the whole of the Chunters to the Romaines, and Mrs. Chunter at once opened her budget of mournful maundering for the express benefit of Mrs. Romaine.

Strange to say, Mr. Paul was not at all captivated with the dashing graces of Honoria Chunter, with whom he danced one dance; and she in her own mind made invidious comparisons between the reserved haughty Oxonian and the rattling Lieutenant of the Lancers, who, if he talked nonsense, was *so* agreeable. Paul seemed much more struck with quiet Alice Fairton, the pale, blue-eyed girl, whom few people seemed to notice; but then she was an orphan, with nothing scarcely to live upon, and every one knew it.

It had been well for Captain Halkett, if the watchful Slingsby had kept him in his eye all the evening, for a slight catastrophe might then have been avoided. But, perhaps owing to habits contracted to foreign service, Captain Halkett

evinced a strong desire for exciting drinks; and having discovered the whereabouts of the champagne, he frequently paid visits to it during the evening, and to such an extent that the effects of that generous fluid became visible in his nose, which was tinted with a crimson hue, and in his speech, which was somewhat husky.

It chanced that after the last of these visits to the champagne, Captain Halkett came back through an inner room used by the guests as a retiring-place from the heat of the ball. No one was in the room but Maude Romaine, who had left her mother deep in one of Mrs. Chunter's sad histories, and had come for a moment's rest and a breath of air. Towards Maude Captain Halkett directed his unsteady steps, and, to her extreme confusion, seated himself by her, and directly in her way should she attempt to regain the ball-room. Maude had felt an instinctive dislike towards Halkett from the first, and his now very evident state increased that feeling tenfold.

"My dear young lady," said the Captain, speaking in a very thick and hesitating voice, and leering upon the blushing and trembling Maude with eyes inflamed by drink—"my dear young lady, d-don't think of moving, I beg! too happy moment to be lost, 'pon my s-soul, delightful this is, I—"

"Captain Halkett, allow me to pass; I can't stay here," said Maude, rising and attempting to quit the room.

But the Captain had taken up a good position, and now laying his hand familiarly on Maude's arm, he exclaimed: "No, no, couldn't lose you so soon! Stop a minute, only a minute; hear what I have got to say." Steadying himself with some difficulty, Captain Halkett relinquished Maude's arm, and, catching her hand, brought it towards his lips; but Maude, frightened and ready to cry though she was, was

nerved to action by her companion's insolence, and snatching her hand from him, pushed the amorous Captain aside, at the same time uttering a little shriek, which, however, was quite inaudible amid the crash of the music. Maude was just springing by her discomfited persecutor when the doorway was darkened by a man, and Paul strode up to them. His dark eyes, which had witnessed the last act in this little scene, were flashing, but there was no excitement in his manner, as he grasped Halkett by the arm and said: "Maude, has this man insulted you?"

"O yes!" was all the frightened girl could say, as she hurried out of the room.

"What the devil do *you* want here?" growled Halkett, as Paul drew him out of sight of the dancers towards the open French windows.

"I want to teach you a lesson, you scoundrel!" answered Paul. "Think yourself lucky I don't expose you before the whole room; get out there, and come in again if you dare." And, suddenly leaving go of the Captain's arm, Paul caught him by the collar, and thrust him through the open window; at the same time giving him an impetus with his foot which sent the doughty captain crashing among the laurel bushes some three feet below.

All this was done in a minute's time, and was unobserved by the gay company in the ball-room. Mr. Paul, having deposited his adversary among the bushes, returned in search of his mother and sister, and soon after took them home. Little Maude had told her mother of her unpleasant adventure, and Mrs. Romaine's anger was justly roused, both against Halkett and the Chunters who had introduced such a person to the ball.

"I hope, Paul, there was no scene between you," she said, when Maude had told her of Paul's opportune arrival.

"O dear no!" said that gentleman quietly. "I merely kicked the blackguard out of the window, as he deserved. It's almost a pity he hadn't further to fall."

"Oh, Paul! did you really do that?" exclaimed Maude, half pleased and half terrified; "but you shouldn't: you know, dear, these things lead to duels and all sorts of dreadful things. You must promise not to fight a duel. Mamma, make him promise."

"Nobody fights duels in these days, Maudie," answered her brother; "besides, that fellow Halkett is much more likely to summon me for an assault than to take any other vengeance; but I don't fancy he'll do that: he'll like to keep the thing quiet."

Paul was right in his supposition. Captain Halkett, on the morning after the ball, discovered that urgent business called him to London, and, after taking leave of the Chunters, he retired to town in company with his friend Mr. Slingsby. His rage against Paul knew no bounds. He would prosecute him for an assault; he would horsewhip him; he would do anything to punish the insolent puppy who had maltreated him. To all this the prudent Slingsby replied: "No, you won't, Halkett! you'll come to town with me before worse comes of it. You're too fond of the bottle, as I've often told you; and if you'd only kept quiet we might have made a good thing of it. Now there's nothing for it but to clear off."

"If I ever forgive that Romaine, may I die!" growled Halkett savagely. "I'll be even with him yet, so help me Heaven!" We shall see whether he kept his word.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

A long stretch of dank, desolate marsh land; grey mists ever creeping up from the neighbouring river, and hanging in thin clouds over the green oozy pools, and sodden patches of grass-land, bringing with them shuddering agues, and endless nameless distempers; no trees, save here and there a few stunted willows which feed on the green corruption of the waters; no life, save a few scared and timid wild-fowl; no sound, save their harsh cry, the mournful soughing of the wind, and the discordant clamour of the marsh frog: such is the scene. It is among the Essex marshes, many miles from any town or large village; the Thames glides along by the edge of this dreary spot, and here and there, on the river's brink, stand old rotting posts, which have faced the rough blasts of many a winter's night, and which once bore the ghastly burden of pirates hung in chains, as a terror to the river-haunting folk. There was little sign of life in these parts; a few scattered hamlets here and there, a wretched tumble-down alehouse now and then on the river's bank, frequented by lightermen and longshore-men, and very queer characters beside, who live mysteriously among the ooze and mud of the river. There was one large house, however, not

far from the water-side, where stood a wharf, used as a landing-place for the house. It was a strange dreary place, where few people would have come from choice, and indeed it was far out of the ken of most people, being best known to the regular frequenters of the river, and they called the house Gaston's Folly.

It was drawing towards evening—towards a wet stormy evening, to all appearance—when a boat was pulled by two men to the ruinous wharf which I have mentioned. One man left the boat immediately it touched the green slimy piles of the wharf, and wrapping himself carefully in a large cloak, so as best to shelter himself from the coming storm, he said to his companion, who seemed a common waterman, "Get the boat under the lee of the shore, and wait till I come back."

"All right, master," answered the man, in a thick hoarse voice. "The rain's a coming on hard: you'd best make haste."

The man in the cloak said no more, but leaving the wharf, proceeded rapidly along a rough stony path which led up to the house. It was an ugly wretched-looking place. The grey walls were stained with damp, and in many places the plaster and even the bricks and stone-work had fallen to pieces. Most of the windows were fastened up with shutters, and others were defended by rusty iron bars. The door of this mansion was of thick oak, studded with large nails, and apparently capable of resisting all attempts at a forcible entry. The visitor from the river reached this door, and rang a loud peal at the bell, which sounded discordantly amid the general stillness of the spot. A small window overhead was opened, and an old man of most unprepossessing appearance looked out at the visitor, and being probably satisfied with his

scrutiny, he presently came down, unfastened a number of ponderous bolts, and finally opened the door and admitted the visitor into a dark stone hall, damp and cheerless, like the outside of the house.

"Where's the master, Davy?" asked the new arrival of the old man.

"In the stone parlour, sir; you'll know the way, I'm thinking."

The other nodded, and crossing the hall and a short passage at the end of it, he opened a door and entered a room, where were a fire, and a man sitting at a table.

"How are you, my friend?" asked the new comer of the man by the table.

"It's you, is it? Oh, I'm well enough," was the answer, given in a tone which sounded more like a growl than a human voice.

The visitor threw off his cloak and hat, and drew a chair near to the fire and opposite the man by the table. This visitor was a tall well-grown man, between forty and fifty, well dressed in dark coloured clothes, and not ill-looking. His face was smoothly shaven; it was a pale thin face, with a long narrow mouth and very thin lips, which showed the teeth when their owner spoke or smiled. These teeth were very white and sharp, and gave the man an expression singularly like a wild beast when he smiled, which he did very often. His eyes were keen, and he had a way of looking in a furtive manner from under his eyelids, as a cat does when she is watching the first gambols of the mouse which she intends to make her victim.

The other man was a short, thick-set, bull-necked personage, with a face almost concealed by a forest of grizzly unkempt

beard and moustache. His grey eyebrows were of immense size, and shrouded two fierce-looking restless eyes; his complexion was burnt of a deep brown, as though he had been much abroad, and he wore a velvet skull-cap on his head. The furniture of the room was of a very incongruous character, being partly costly and partly of the meanest kind. There was a handsome mirror over the fire-place, and common chairs, some broken, about the room. The table was large and good, and the carpet of the finest texture, yet the walls were bare, and a huge lumbering bureau stood in one corner, a piece of furniture which few would have rescued from the treasuries of Wardour Street.

"You've come quickly enough this time," said the owner of the beard, in the same growling voice, as he took a large hookah from his mouth and expelled a cloud of smoke.

"I understood your message was urgent, Gaston," answered his companion in a voice whose singularly well modulated tones contrasted strongly with the growl of Gaston.

"Well, so it was. I want to talk to you about things—I mayn't have many more chances to do it."

"My good friend," said his soft-spoken companion, "don't talk like that; you mustn't get these ideas into your head."

"What do you know about my ideas?" said Gaston gruffly. "Look here, Philip Hyllyer! it's of no use your trying to deceive me, because I'm not to be fooled so easily. You'd be precious glad if I knocked under to-morrow, aye, or to-night either."

Hyllyer smiled at this speech, a quiet cat-like expression came over his face, and he showed his white teeth to perfection. "Now really, Gaston, you're too bad," he said, rubbing his long thin hands together softly; "you shouldn't say those

sort of things, you know. I'm not by any means the mercenary man you take me for. Of course, it's of no use denying that I have expectations from you: our agreement makes that certain; but as to wishing you to go, my good friend, the idea is horrible, really horrible."

"Very horrible, no doubt," said Gaston from the depths of a cupboard, whence he was bringing a case of wine and spirits, from which both men helped themselves. "It's very horrible, I dare say," he continued, resuming his seat, "but it's true for all that. Do you think Rob Gaston is such a fool as not to know you, Hyllyer, after all we've been through together? No, no! never lie to the devil, now: it's of no use. But this is all nothing. I've one or two things to say to you."

"I am all attention," said Philip Hyllyer, smiling at the fire.

"Well, then," continued Gaston, "I've had my warnings lately pretty clear, and I'm on the move. My ship's settling down by the head pretty fast, I can tell. It might have been put off a bit longer if I hadn't played the devil with my vitals in other times, and if I wasn't obliged from motives of prudence to live in this infernal rat-hole; but now it's too late; and, as I said before, I'm on the move fast."

Any third person who might have watched this scene would have noticed a singular expression, a kind of cold glitter in the eyes of Hyllyer, as Robert Gaston repeated this remark: it might have been the reflection of the fire, into which Hyllyer still gazed, but the glitter was undoubtedly in his eyes.

"I said I've had my warnings," said Gaston, going on with his speech in a growling defiant tone of voice, "and what's more, I've had a prick of conscience."

"Of *what?*" interrupted Hyllyer, smiling with all his teeth, and opening his eyes with real or feigned surprise.

"Of conscience! don't you hear, man?" growled Gaston still more deeply: "I've got such a thing, though it's been rusty for a long term of years; and if it comes to comparison, I'm not sure that I wouldn't sooner have my own conscience, rusty as it is, than yours, Hyllyer, which is, I daresay, as bright as a new penny; but then, you see, I never was a good hand at hypocrisy."

"Never mind that," said Hyllyer, with more anxiety in his tone than he had yet evinced. "What has your conscience been troubling you about now?"

"About my relations, the only ones I have in the world," answered Gaston. "They're poor now, and come down to nothing, and I might do them some good with my money; it would be a satisfaction before I go to do *one* good act. *This* money is all honestly come by, at any rate."

This speech produced a most evident effect on Hyllyer; he changed colour, from pale to ghastly grey, and his eyes gleamed with a fire which could never have been excited by feelings of a kindly nature.

"Well, Gaston, you have surprised me," he said, after a moment's pause: "so you are wishing to enrich the people who treated you with contempt, and disowned your relationship? On my word, a noble return!"

"*He* is dead; he it was that disowned me," said Gaston; "I swore never to forgive *him*, nor did I; but my quarrel is not with his wife or children, and they are poor."

"Yes, and doubtless as proud as they are poor," answered Hyllyer, "ready to disown the scapegrace cousin who ran

away to sea, and who did certain other things which I need not mention."

"Well, they wouldn't have much to be proud of in me now, so I can hardly blame them."

"But listen, Gaston! you can't do this mad thing without doing me a gross injustice. You know our agreement, you know your promise."

"Well, and isn't the will made in your favour and in the lawyer's hands?" demanded Gaston.

"True, my good friend, but you alarmed me by talking of providing for these relations, these Romaines; and then, you know, you must make a new will."

"And why shouldn't I ?" demanded Gaston, looking his companion full in the face."

"I will tell you why, Robert Gaston," replied Hyllyer, smiling more than ever, and speaking softly as was his wont; "I will tell you why, because I know too much, my very excellent friend; because I know certain little incidents in your life which would, if disclosed, prevent your finishing your days (which we hope may be many) in peace and freedom. Certain little facts connected with the Bank of Melbourne, for instance, and during your first visit to the goldfields. That is why you must not alter your will, my good friend."

"And you really mean that you'd betray me, rake up the sins of my past life after years of solitary misery have been endured. You mean that you'd do all this, and betray me, Hyllyer?" Gaston said this in a tone in which bitter scorn mingled with his usual roughness.

"Betray, my dear friend, is an unpleasant word, a very unpleasant word," replied Hyllyer in his soft insinuating

way; "pray don't use any such term in reference to the matter. Nothing of the sort will be necessary, I am certain. You won't make a new will in behalf of these proud beggars who would spurn you from their door if you sought them."

"Spurn me! They would not, they dare not; and yet, after all, it's more than probable that they might. Well, Hyllyer, you're pretty safe, I think, to inherit Rob Gaston's money yet; and, by Heaven, you won't have long to wait. I felt a pang then right through my heart: a few more of them will finish me, I know." He was very pale as he spoke, and leaned on the table for support.

Hyllyer watched him with a look of great interest, as a surgeon might an interesting case, and then said: "Never think of dying, Gaston: it's not a pleasant thought, and had better be kept out of sight as long as possible. Now I think we have said all we have to say, so I'll be off."

"You'd better stay all night, it's a wet evening."

"No, thank you, I've business to do in town before I go to bed: I shall see you perhaps to-morrow. Good night." So saying, Philip Hyllyer left the room, and as he passed through the front door, which was opened for him by the old man of unpleasant aspect, he said to him: "Take care of the master, Davy: he's far from well, I'm afraid." And so he passed out into the night, and, reaching the wharf, roused the hoarse boatman with a loud whistle. The boatman, as he pulled up the river with his companion, was hoarser than ever, yet he and Hyllyer seemed to have much to say to each other. Landing where life had once more resumed its reign, Hyllyer took his place in a late train and was carried off to London.

Robert Gaston was the first cousin of Paul Romaine's father. Not devoid of talent as a young man, he had, how-

ever, rejected all attempts at a regular education; and after going the round of vice, to which his chosen companions introduced him, he was disowned by his family, and ran away to sea. In Australia, to which place he came in the course of his wanderings, Gaston formed an acquaintance with Philip Hyllyer, who had lost a good situation in a bank owing to some suspected fraud, which, however, was never proved. These two men entered into a kind of partnership, and went through scenes which I have neither the means nor the taste to describe. Somehow it always happened that Gaston was implicated in all acts of more than common risk, and that Hyllyer, the contriver of the scheme, was innocent of its execution.

In this and other ways Hyllyer had gained an ascendancy over the mind of his partner, which had steadily increased till their parting in Australia. Both had gone to the gold-fields, and had been successful, Hyllyer especially so. He determined therefore to return to England with his gold, but Gaston chose to remain behind, and try his luck again. They parted, and I suppose Gaston hoped never to see his dangerous and smooth-spoken friend again. In his next venture, Gaston, though he avoided all dishonest acts, was most successful, and was enabled to return to England possessed of considerable wealth. He had not long been in England when Hyllyer discovered him, told him that he had lost his own fortune in unsuccessful speculations, and, moreover, hinted darkly to Gaston that he had better keep himself secluded, as there were rumours abroad in England which might be unpleasant if they grew to anything but rumours. It is probable that Hyllyer deceived Gaston in this way in order to keep him out of the hands of others. At his advice Gaston built the dreary

house by the river's side, which the river-folk christened Gaston's Folly, and lived there quite secluded, seldom going far from home, and often visited by Hyllyer, who lived in London. By working partly on his kindlier feelings, and partly on his fears—for he was a weak man—Hyllyer had lately induced Gaston to make a will in his favour, and had seen it safely lodged with a solicitor; in fact, with a former partner of Mr. Slingsby, with whom that gentleman occasionally communicated now. Such being the state of Mr. Philip Hyllyer's prospects, and his present means of living being neither very certain nor very reputable, it is not surprising that he was greatly discomposed by Gaston's conversation, more especially with that part of it which referred to his conscience, and to his projected alteration of his will. In spite, too, of Gaston's last words, Hyllyer was by no means assured that a new will would not be made. "The fool will get ill, and then have another prick of conscience, or some such nonsense, and then good-bye to my fortune; but this must be seen to at once." Such were Philip Hyllyer's thoughts as the night-train bore him to London.

CHAPTER IX.

COMING UP.

CHRISTMAS time was past. The yule log had burned away into grey ashes; the holly and misletoe, lately so green and fresh, were withered and curled up; the Christmas cheer had all been eaten, the healths had all been drunk, and the family gatherings which the season had called together had once more been broken up, and the relations and friends, the dear uncles and cousins and married sisters, and the poor relations, not very dear always, were scattered once again to the four quarters of the globe.

Such being the state of things, Paul Romaine found himself at Paddington one bleak afternoon in January, ready to go up to Oxford by the next train. He had lately arrived by another line from Inglefell, and he was stamping his numbed feet to warm them a little, when his name was pronounced close at hand, and he found that Percy Cheyne was by his side. Paddington station, perhaps the most quiet and orderly of all the metropolitan termini save one, presents an animated scene at the commencement of the Oxford term. Men are hurrying on to the platform generally a few moments before the train starts, followed by obsequious porters, who carry rainbow-coloured railway rugs, bundles of walking sticks and riding

whips, hat-boxes, and similar items of male luggage. Here another porter, also obsequious—for he expects half-a-crown, in spite of the Company's prohibition—is dragging a shaggy Scotch terrier to his destined box; he lodges his unwilling charge in his rather close place of retirement, and touches his cap suggestively. How well do Oxford men know that touch of the cap! in Oxford everybody is doing it all day to every University man, and it means invariably one thing—money! The scout does it at every meeting in the quad, and he is looking for his perquisites and his terminal "tips." The porter does it, and he expects to be remembered. Hangers-on, messengers, postmen, all do it, and all have an eye to "tips," sooner or later.

But we are on the Paddington platform: let us not wander away as yet. You may see one or two little domestic scenes here occasionally, but not often. Yonder is a freshman, "an undoubted case of freshman," as Percy Cheyne remarks to Paul, as he directs his attention to a thin youth with a very stiff collar, who is trying to look at his ease, and isn't succeeding a bit; while the stout gentleman by his side who is fidgety about the luggage is, as Percy also observes, "an incontestable case of tender parient." Yonder is a mother saying good-bye to her son, and no remarks are made on *that* incident. Oxford men are ever gentlemen as a body, and ever respect the sacred name of mother, which is too often profaned elsewhere. There is little or no talking of "the old woman," in reference to her to whom most honour and love are due, at Oxford. Such phrases may suit the knife-board of an omnibus laden with "city gents," but they will scarcely pass current by the Isis.

But enough of this: the bell clangs: "Any more going on

for Oxford, Ox—ford !" shouts the guard ; shrieks the whistle, and away go half a hundred men or more to the City of Colleges.

Paul Romaine enjoyed Oxford far more in this his second term, as every one does. He was beginning to know a few men whom he liked, Cheyne and Challoner especially; he was no longer a freshman, and was dropping down into the ways of the place easily and comfortably. The weather, too, was mild and fine for the season, and Paul could daily resort to the river, and as he was, like most Eton men, an excellent oar, his skill soon attracted the notice of the St. Chrys'tom's crew as they were dressing in their barge.

"I say, M'Anstie," said Anderson to the stroke of the college Eight, "look at that man there in the skiff. That's Romaine, the fellow I was telling you about; he's a pretty sculler, isn't he ?"

"By Jove, he's as good a sculler as I know," answered M'Anstie. "I ought to have spoken to him. We'll have him in the Torpid this term. He's coming in now: I'll speak to him."

The Torpid, I must tell you, is the second eight-oared boat of a college. As Paul stepped out of his skiff, he encountered M'Anstie, who, plunging at once *in medias res*, said: "Oh, Romaine, would you like to be in the Torpid this term? because we shall be very glad to have you."

"Do you think I can pull well enough?" asked Paul.

"Of course! you can pull a precious deal better than many of them. They're going down now: are you too tired to go with them?"

"O dear no! you can see if I shall do, you know."

A man was quickly displaced by M'Anstie, and Paul took his seat with no little satisfaction among the crew of the St.

Chrys'tom's Torpid. M'Anstie was one, going with them to "coach" the crew, a duty for which his skill and strength as an old oar well qualified him.

"Are you going to steer, Mac?" asked one of the crew. "It's too bad to have to pull your great limbs about."

"Never mind that: you can't do without me to bully you a bit," replied M'Anstie, settling himself in his seat, and taking the tiller-ropes in his hands. Away they went, with a pretty regular swing, considering that the crew was only young and early in practice. M'Anstie kept his critical eye steadily on Paul, as he issued his orders in a sharp, quick tone to the crew. "Steady, Two! More forward, Six! Time, time, Three! mind the time, Three!" So on till they came nearly to Iffley Lock, and then, when M'Anstie had shouted "Easy all!" and they were resting on their oars, he said to Paul: "Well pulled, Four! you'll do first-rate."

Others of the crew complimented Paul ere they pulled back to the barge, and he was quite a Triton among the minnows by the time they left the boat.

"Training begins next week, and you must begin then, Romaine; there's no doubt you'll be in the crew. No pastry, mind, in hall, and bed at ten, or I shall be down upon you." So spoke M'Anstie, and the Torpid heard but to obey, for they had a race to win, and everything must be endured to ensure success.

And so Paul went into training: no very severe trial for a regular and abstemious man; but still unpleasant, as all compulsory things are. During this time Paul had his eyes opened to the existence of certain doings in college which showed certain perpetrators of said doings in the very worst possible light. "The Phlegethon Club" had largely increased

its members lately, several fast freshmen had joined it this term, and it had become more noisy, more drunken, and more given to playing unlimited loo than ever. There were rumours about the college of the wild scenes enacted on club nights, and it was darkly hinted that the Dean had his eye, or I should rather say his *eye-glass*, on these black sheep, and was only waiting for a member to be taken *in flagrante delicto* to open the vials of his wrath on the whole body.

"You've got a nice sort of Club here," said Challoner one evening, as he sat in Paul's rooms; "it's getting talked about all over the university. You don't belong to it, I suppose?"

"Not quite," said Paul. "Much obliged to you for supposing that I might. The fact is, it *is* a rascally bad concern, and they're a precious bad set in it."

"So I should imagine, without any deep exercise of the mental faculties," replied Challoner. "We've got no end of clubs in Christ Church, but I never heard of anything quite so brimstonian in its tendencies as this Phlegethon affair of yours. Don't the Dons smell the sulphur?"

"Well, I fancy the Dean smells a sulphurous rat somewhere about; the men will get beans if they *are* spotted, won't they?"

"Very little doubt about that. They'll be sent down at least, especially if the stories are true about certain little tricks at cards popular amongst them."

"Well, I'm very sorry, for there's a man among them whom I like very much, and I shouldn't like him to go to the bad," said Paul.

"Then I recommend you to get him out of Phlegethon as soon as you can. What's his name?" asked Challoner.

"Cheyne; I fancy you've seen him here," replied Paul. "I'm pretty sure he's not bad in himself: it's only these infernal men who have got hold of him."

"He's a weak vessel, I suppose," said Challoner, "and so they've sucked him into their precious slough; but you'd better talk to him and try what you can do. It's a ticklish kind of thing, and you'll probably offend him; but as you're of the same standing it won't so much matter, and anyhow it's a sort of duty."

"I'll try, at all events," answered Paul.

As he spoke, loud shouts, mingled with a roaring chorus of a song, were heard proceeding from the opposite side of the quad.

"Those are your friends of Phlegethon, I presume. By Jove, they roar an 'twere any nightingale," said Challoner.

"Most of them are pretty well screwed, I expect, judging from the sound of their voices," replied Paul. "I wish they'd stop that row, though, for I want to read."

"And I must go to the delightful page of the venerable Aristotle, so good night." And Challoner departed, sporting his friend's oak, in case any wandering votary from the Phlegethon Club should mistake the door for his own.

On the following morning Paul Romaine entered Percy Cheyne's rooms, and found their owner just commencing breakfast about half-past ten o'clock. Stropper was lounging in an arm-chair near. Paul's first impulse was to go out on seeing this man, one of the worst members of the club; but he determined to stand his ground and wait for Stropper's departure.

"Come in, Romaine," cried Percy Cheyne, "I haven't seen you lately. Have you breakfasted?"

"Thanks, yes, nearly two hours ago."

"Ah, you're a regular bird, go to chapel and all that; you see I'm not."

"I can't stand morning chapel, for my part," said Stropper, yawning.

"I should fancy not, after such evenings as you spent last night; it's just as well that you can't, I should say," said Paul.

"Oh, you're pious, I declare! I didn't know that," drawled Stropper.

"No, I'm not pious, though there would be nothing *very* ridiculous in that; the only thing is, that I haven't got into a sufficient state of conventional blasphemy to allow me to get drunk at night, and take God's name in vain in morning chapel."

Mr. Paul looked very hard at Stropper as he said this, and though that gentleman had an unlimited stock of impudence always on hand, yet he winced a little under Paul's eye.

"Well, you're too good for me: I feel I'm not fit for such piety, so I'll leave the rest of the sermon to you, Cheyne." So saying, Stropper left the room.

"I say, Romaine, draw it mild! you're coming it a little too strong, I think," said Percy.

"Coming *what* too strong?" asked Paul in his dogged way; for our friend could be as obstinate and immoveable as a mule when he chose.

"Why, you know, you oughtn't to drive a man out of my rooms by preaching to him."

"I never preach, Cheyne," said Paul; "but if your friends can't bear to hear a little truth without bolting out of the room, why I wish you joy of their acquaintance. I should fancy the man who has just left us is not likely to be scared by any words, good, bad, or indifferent, though they do say that the devil is afraid of holy water."

"Well, never mind! you didn't come here on purpose to kick up a shine, I suppose; so what is it, old fellow?"

Percy had recovered his good humour already. He was one of those light-hearted, impulsive men, who take offence easily, but forgive still more easily, and are led to good or evil according to the company into which they are thrown.

"No, I didn't come to quarrel, or jaw, or anything of the kind; though, I confess, the sight of that drunken cad riled me a bit," said Paul, speaking in that pure-flowing slang which flourishes so genially at Oxford. "But I want to talk to you a little, Cheyne; so if you've got no lectures on, and have finished your breakfast, come out and take a turn round Christ Church meadows."

"All right, I'm your man," answered Percy, and they went out together. "Now I don't set up for a prophet in Israel," said Cheyne, as they turned out of the High, past the Botanic Gardens, and so into the meadows; "but it strikes me that you're going to slang me, Romaine."

"No, not exactly, I've no right to slang you, you know," said Paul; "but I want to give you a word of advice: no humbug, but real friendly advice; it's given in four words—Cut the Phlegethon Club."

"It's easy enough to say, Cut the Phlegethon," answered Cheyne, "but not so easily done: one of the rules is, that if any member cuts it in less than a year, *he* is to be cut by the other men."

"So much the better for him," said Paul laconically.

"I don't see that. Come, 'your reason, Jack, your reason!' *Why* should I cut the Club?"

"Because you're going to the devil with it," answered Paul as laconically as before.

"My dear fellow, that's all bosh; you don't know anything about the Club."

"I know quite enough of it to make my advice worth taking, Cheyne. I know *this* about it, that its chief members are the fastest, the idlest, the most ignorant, and the most reckless men in college. I know that two or three times a week I can hear the awful row you are all making, up till twelve o'clock and later. I can see men reeling about in the quad as drunk as they can be, singing beastly songs, and saying beastly things: I know from good authority that you gamble most furiously; and I know that most of the men in Stropper's rooms last night were drunk."

"And you've never been drunk yourself, I suppose?" asked Cheyne.

"Whether I have or not, makes not the slightest difference to this question," answered Paul; "all I know is, that I'm very sorry to see you among such men, and I wish very much you'd leave them. I dare say you're thinking what business is it of mine?"

"Well, I was thinking so, I confess," said Percy Cheyne.

"Exactly. Of course it's no business of mine personally: if men like to go to the bad, why they can; it's no affair of mine, and as a rule, I assure you, I shouldn't lift my finger to stop them; but I like you, Cheyne, and I think it's a pity you should be such an infernal fool (excuse my plain speaking) as to mingle with those fellows."

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you, Romaine: it's very kind and jolly of you to have said all this," said Percy, "and sometimes I'm half sorry that I joined the Club; it does run away with a precious lot of coin, there's no doubt about

that. But you see I'm a full member now, and I can't leave without being cut by all the men of the Club."

"A terrible punishment, truly!" said Paul scornfully; "why, man, it's the very best thing that could happen to you."

"I'll think about it: if I can get away I will; at all events I won't get screwed any more."

"Can you touch pitch and not be defiled?" said Paul. "Don't *think* about it, but leave them."

"Well, I'll see. Thank you for your advice: I may be more grateful some day than I seem now. I'm off to the Union. Good bye."

Paul looked after him, and shook his head doubtfully. "I'm afraid that man will come to grief," he said, and so turned into college.

That afternoon, after Paul had been down in the Torpid to Iffley and back, for practice, he encountered Challoner in Broad Street, and the two friends strolled out upon the Banbury Road. This road is a favourite walk with the unacademic residents in Oxford, as well as with Dons and undergraduates; and there are generally more ladies to be seen here, near the fashionable quarter called The Crescent, than anywhere else near the city.

"That was a pretty girl: did you see her, Romaine?" said Challoner, as they walked along.

"No," replied Paul, who had been silent and thoughtful for some time. "I don't often look at the girls about here. I don't go in for that sort of thing."

"What sort of thing?" asked Challoner.

"Why, girls, to be sure. I don't think anything of them,

as a rule, and I hate all that spoony humbug which some men are always talking about."

"Do you mean to set yourself up for a woman-hater?" asked Challoner.

"Well, perhaps I'm rather inclined to take Euripides' word for such matters: he had good cause to know about them."

"My good fellow," rejoined Challoner very warmly, "I wonder that *you* should rake up that miserable example: the one argument which the misogynist always brings forward, sometimes throwing Xantippe into the scale by way of a make-weight. Do you suppose that being a woman-hater was any credit to Euripides? It only showed that though a good poet, he was a fool in other matters. There isn't on the earth a character for which I entertain a more profound contempt and dislike than for a professed woman-hater; first, because he is a humbug, for no man *really* hates women; and next, because it makes him speak disrespectfully of beings who are purer and better than himself."

"You are enthusiastic, Challoner," said Paul coldly; he wasn't fond of being talked at in this way.

"I *am* enthusiastic on this subject," replied his friend, "because I'm sick to death of this humbug of men calling themselves woman-haters, and setting themselves up as being above all such trifles. It's only their infernal vanity that makes them do it. Now-a-days, if any spoony idiot is refused by a girl, he immediately takes up the cry that they're all alike, all jilts, all false; arriving at this logical conclusion from the fact that *one* girl has declined the honour of his advances."

"That's all very fine, Challoner," said Paul, "but I don't

exactly see what it leads to. I am not the spoony idiot in question, I presume; so that if your outburst of slanging is intended for me, why you've wasted your sweetness on the desert air, that's all."

"Why, you confessed that you were inclined towards misogyny, just now."

"I confessed that I didn't think much of girls, nor do I; and what's more, old fellow, you can't alter my opinion, though you speak like Demosthenes, Cicero, and any amount of modern orators all in one lump. If it isn't to my taste to go leering and ogling after every bonnet I see, and fancying myself in love with every girl I talk to, what harm is there?"

"No harm in that, I grant you," replied Challoner; "but that's not what I mean, as you know very well. You said just now, and you've often said it before, that you go in for woman-hating, or despising, if you like the term better, and this is what I take up my parable about. I maintain, for a man, especially a young man, to call himself a misogynist, and to be proud of it, is to declare himself a vain and presumptuous ass. Any man, the most intellectual, the most deeply read, is improved by woman's society; it humanizes him, softens him down, rubs off his sharp angles. Look at the Dons up here, as a class; they are the best scholars in the country, and yet what a set of shy, awkward, uncouth men they are, looking, many of them, as though they had just been picked out of an old clothes shop; they've got all the Greek and Latin and philosophy on board, but they want the better angels to brush their hats and teach them manners."

"Oh, I'm ready to admit that being with women refines a man," said Paul. "Of course one doesn't talk before one's

mother or sisters as in college; but as for the necessity of loving and kissing and marrying, I don't see it and I don't believe in the necessity."

"You will some day," said Challoner.

"Not I."

"We shall see," rejoined Challoner.

"We shall," said Paul; and they parted on these terms.

Paul thought a good deal of this talk afterwards, and I am afraid came to the conclusion that he was quite right. We have nothing to do now, however, with thoughts; the Torpid races have begun, and we must go whither all Oxford is going, down to the river.

It is a windy, cold day, but there is no sign of rain, so crowds of people are flocking along past Merton and Christ Church and some from Magdalen way, to one point, the barges. These barges, owned by the different colleges, are gay to-day with flags, each barge displaying its college colours. Chief in size and beauty is the University barge, always called The 'Varsity Barge to distinguish it from that of University College. On the flag-staff of the 'Varsity barge are displayed the colours of the racing Torpids, in the order which they will occupy on the river, and their flags will be shifted according to the "bumps" made, the boat which is bumped having to drop astern of that which has administered the bump. See, Brasenose is head of the river, there is the yellow flag at the top of the line; then comes Balliol, and St. Chrys'tom's is third; immediately followed by Corpus, which is said to have a good boat on this term.

The 'Varsity barge is already thronged with ladies and Dons, and a band is playing away among them. The other barges have a few fair crews, but not many; it is the summer

term when they blossom forth into gay crowds of ladies fair. On the path there are motley groups, smartly-dressed townspeople, college scouts, grave old Dons, kindly old Dons, prim young Dons, sniggering nursemaids, dressy dressmakers, tawdry town-girls, and a few, a *very* few, ladies.

But now the band has ceased playing, a gun is heard down Iffley way, and all faces are turned in that direction.

"Shall we bump Balliol, do you think?" asks Mr. St. Albyn of Percy Cheyne, who prefers shouting on the barge to running with the crowd on the opposite bank.

"I hope so, sir, but I'm almost afraid not," answers Percy. "There's the second gun: they'll be off in a minute."

A minute of anxious expectation, then bang goes the last gun, and the boats have started. Before they come into the sight of those on the barges, the men who are running on the Berkshire side have a full view of the race. It is an exciting scene—that crowd of men, many in their different-coloured boating dresses, rushing along at the top of their speed, sometimes getting pushed into the river, and all the while shouting lustily to their college boats, and encouraging the crew to do their best. Now the leading boats are in "the Gut," a part of the river where a bump is most commonly made, and the excitement is intense. Brasenose is leading well ahead of the rest, the black oars flashing steadily in the glancing water, and deafening shouts of "Well rowed, Brasenose, well rowed!" resound from the banks and barges.

But the greatest interest now centres in the three next boats. Balliol has given up all hope of bumping Brasenose, and is straining every nerve to avoid *being* bumped by St. Chrys'tom's, which comes on behind like a very Nemesis; and Corpus behind that again is drawing nearer than formerly

to the stern of St. Chrys'tom's, where little Spicer the cox-swain is wild with excitement, but for all that is steering his boat admirably. Now comes the shouting as the race is seen from the barges, and the rival cries are reiterated loudly and sharply on every side. "Well rowed, Balliol! go it!" "Now, Chrys'tom's, *now* you're gaining; well rowed, well rowed, St. Chrys'tom's!" "Corpus, Corpus! put it on, Corpus!" And Corpus *did* put it on, but to no purpose, for St. Chrys'-tom's stuck steadily to their work, and got well away from their purple and red pursuers, and all but touched the stern of Balliol as the second pistol was fired, announcing that the winning post was reached.

"Another second and we should have done it," said Spicer, as the band burst forth with "See the conquering hero comes," and Brasenose, still head of the river, rowed quietly back to their barge after the other boats had reached the winning post. Only two bumps had been made, and these were among the lower boats, so that expectation pointed to the next day as the real race. Paul had done his work well in the race. He had felt the responsibility, never having pulled in a race of such importance before; but he had gone through with it steadily, without hurry or over-excitement, and the long steady pull of his strong arms had never failed or flagged during the minutes of intense and momentarily growing excitement. All the talk in Hall that night was of the Torpids.

"We shall bump Balliol to-morrow," said Spicer, the cox of the boat, confidently as he sat at dinner.

"I'm not so sure," said Curzon, who was one of the Torpid crew.

"I'll bet you two to one we do," said Spicer sharply.

"I shan't bet against our own boat, of course," replied Curzon.

"*Labor omnia vincit improbus*," quoted Douglas, a scholar, from the other side of the table.

"Sconce him! he's said more than three words of Latin," said Stropper.

"Are you sure they *were* Latin, Stropper?" asked Paul with a sneer.

"I'm sure he'll get sconced, and that's enough," replied Stropper, and at once proceeded to send up a note to the senior commoner in Hall, stating the quotation and begging that Douglas might be sconced. And he was sconced accordingly, a quart tankard of beer appearing presently, which went round the table amid the laughter of the men.

This sconcing is a time-honoured institution, though, like many others, it is sometimes "more honoured in the breach than the observance." As far as it is a punishment for swearing, or unseemly talk in Hall, it is excellent; but when so pressed as to include all quotations, and all talking of "shop"—this to be defined by the men present—it often becomes a tyrannical institution, a stopper to all sensible conversation, and an abominable nuisance.

Though Curzon declined to bet against the boat, many bets were made that night on the event of St. Chrys'tom's bumping Balliol, and of Corpus bumping St. Chrys'tom's.

The next day was cold and gusty, and the river was full of small waves which would make the labour of rowing all the harder. Fewer spectators were out in consequence of the weather, but most of the University was present. Again the anxious expectation; again the report of the guns away by Iffley; again the shouting, rushing crowd along the banks. But as the shouts became more audible, the men on the St. Chrys'tom's barge could hear that hundreds of voices were *shouting*: "Now, Chrys'tom's! now you're gaining, put it on!"

while faint in comparison were the cries: "Balliol, Balliol! well rowed, Balliol!" Just by the Gut there was a frantic cry of "Now, St. Chrys'tom's!" They answered to the cry nobly. Spicer blew his shrill whistle as a signal for a "spurt," and the boat bounded through the water and ran its nose well into the stern of the Balliol Torpid, amidst a loud shout of triumph from banks and barges.

And so Balliol was bumped, and St. Chrys'tom's was second on the river. On came the other boats, surging through the rough water; the scarlet oars of Magdalen, hard pressed by the blue oars with the golden cross of University; the light blue of Wadham has succumbed to the prowess of Christ Church; and Pembroke is hotly pursued by Jesus, the Welsh boat, with oars and uniform of green. It would strike an uninitiated spectator as being something like profanity to hear the shouts of "Go it, Jesus! well rowed! you'll bump 'em yet!" See, yonder are the slow coaches, coming on in a style which shows that the crew are, to use Percy Cheyne's words, "deucedly pumped, and no mistake." The pink oars of Worcester are dipping rather feebly, and the funereal black and white of Magdalen Hall looks especially dreary so far behind.

But St. Chrys'tom's has bumped Balliol, and Paul Romaine is satisfied. The races continued for several days, but St. Chrys'tom's cannot approach the victorious black and yellow of Brasenose; and on the last day of the Torpids, when the flags are altered for the last time, the red and yellow still flies first, and next the well-known colours of St. Chrys'tom's. Then came the bump supper with all its noise and revelry; but I doubt if Mr. Paul enjoyed that half so much as those minutes of anxiety when he was tugging at his oar in the midst of the crowded Isis.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUMMER TERM.

It has been suggested to me that certain of my acquaintances may discover likenesses to themselves in some of the personages of this history, and be offended thereat; but *que voulez-vous?* can I help it? However, if there be any such thin-skinned ones who peruse these pages, let them take the following incident to heart. Travelling once abroad, I went by chance into a barber's shop; and, while submitting myself to the hands of the worthy tonsor, I remarked that his shop contained a large assortment of block-heads, the faces of which were very ingeniously carved. I praised the workmanship; whereupon the barber said: "Ah! sir, those block-heads have been a great source of trouble to me!"

"How so?" asked I in astonishment.

"Why, in this way, sir," answered he; "when they were first exhibited in my shop, not a day passed but a crowd of people came here, and asked me whether I meant to insult them, for such and such a block-head was exactly like them in the face; and one old gentleman went so far as to call me very ill names on the occasion. Well, this troubled me greatly for a time, but at length I could bear it no longer. So one day, when a crowd of complainants were assembled in my

shop, 'Gentlemen,' said I, 'you are angry because you see a likeness to yourselves in these block-heads of mine; but if such a likeness does exist, it is clearly the fault of Nature, and not mine; so you must blame Nature for it, and leave me and my block-heads alone.' And believe me, sir, not one of them ever complained afterwards."

I leave the moral of the barber's story to those of my friends who think they discover a likeness in any of my characters. And now let us get back to Oxford as fast as we may.

The summer term had begun. Chilly, dusty, treacherous spring (for in spite of what poets say to the contrary, spring is a very unpleasant part of the year), had vanished, and the long bright days of summer had fairly commenced. I know no place more pleasant than Oxford in the summer-time; if one could only be idle all day, there is no better place in the world to dream and be idle in. But when a man is conscientious, and is firmly determined to get through his fixed amount of reading daily, he has a hard struggle with the sunshine, the green trees, the fair sky, and the delights of the river and the cricket-field, all which allure him, like so many syrens, away from his hot rooms and his books.

Paul Romaine found this in his first summer term; but being of a firm, not to say obstinate, character, the syrens were generally unsuccessful with him. When, however, the books were closed, Paul realized the full enjoyment of the season. How often did he, in after years, look back, as so many men have done, to those glorious summer days in Oxford—days when the noble college fronts looked bright and cheerful in the pure clear atmosphere, the graceful towers of All Souls' standing out sharply against the background of

blue sky; St. Mary's spire glowing in the sunset, its beautiful carvings bathed in a rosy mist—days when the mighty trees in the Broad Walk extended a kindly shade over the hot boating-man as he came hurrying back from the river, over the cool lounger and the simpering nurse-maid, and over the portly Don strolling out in search of an appetite before Hall. Many an hour is spent among the summer trees and bright flowers of the gardens of St. John's and New College, which is thought little of then, but often longed for—ah! how earnestly!—when life has proved a path with many thorns and very few roses, a desert where the gardens and such like oases are *very* "few and far between."

But what matters it? After all, Horace's maxim of "*carpe diem*," is the best: let us enjoy the gardens, and the flowers and sunshine while they last; and when the gardens are bare, the flowers withered, and the sunshine gone, we must wrap our cloak about us (if we have one), and go out to meet the wind and rain as manfully as we may. So thought our friend Paul, as with a volume of Tom Moore's poems in his hand, he reclined at ease under a chestnut tree in St. John's gardens. From this luxurious ease he was aroused by the voice of Challoner, addressing him with: "Oh! here you are, most lazy of Sybarites! I've been looking for you half over Oxford."

"Have you?" said Paul, "I'm very sorry, I'm sure; but not having the faintest idea that you wanted me I couldn't be expected to be on the look-out."

"Well, come on the river, will you?"

"What now? with the thermometer at ninety degrees! Not if I know it."

"Nonsense! it's the coolest place," retorted Challoner;

"besides, we needn't pull, we'll have a punt and float down the river. Or have a canoe if you like."

"No, that will be too much like the card in the song, you know—what is it?—'Nelly Grey,' when he says: 'We'll float down the river in the little red canoe, while my banjo so sweetly I'll play.' But I don't mind a punt."

Accordingly, Paul and Challoner departed towards Medley Lock, on that part of the river which is less frequented than the Iffley end, and where a long row of trees offers a strong inducement to those who understand the true *dolce far niente* enjoyment as well as Oxford men do.

Beautiful looked the Isis in the bright sunshine, as our two friends embarked in their punt, and allowed it to drift pretty much as the stream directed. The river, which is broader here than in most parts, was flashing into a thousand sparkles; here and there large beds of green water-weeds lay, like miniature islands. On one side was the flat expanse of Port Meadow, with its browsing cattle; on the other, the long avenue of trees, fringing the towing-path; and over all hung the fair blue sky, flecked with masses of white cloud, like capes and far-off headlands rising out of the ocean.

Paul and Challoner punted themselves leisurely along till the avenue was reached. Beneath the shade the water lay dark and cool, the tall reeds rustled, the insects made a dreamy hum, and all things seemed to invite repose. Our friends did not go to sleep, however, but letting their punt drift in among the reeds, they lay on their cushions and looked up dreamily into the sky, and thought. A writer of the present day has said most truly that young men *think* more than old ones, and that to speak of "thoughtless youths," meaning persons who seldom or never think, is a great mistake. Of course there

are people who, like the jolly young waterman in the song, "row along, thinking of nothing at all;" but they will do so just as much at sixty as at twenty. Young men do not think so much of the cares of life, because they have never known them; but their minds are generally more occupied than those of their seniors, who have fought the battle of life and are resting on their arms in that stage of existence which may be styled "the after-dinner napping stage." So Paul and Challoner thought, or dreamed if you like it better, as they lay in their punts on that summer afternoon.

"What are you thinking about, Challoner?" asked Paul, whose reverie came to an end first.

"Of many things," answered his friend; "among others, that a happy home must be a very jolly thing."

"Why, of course it is. It needs no ghost to tell us that," said Paul.

"Exactly; but I didn't put it forth as a new idea, Romaine," said Challoner gravely; "I meant that I wished I could enjoy what others do, a really happy home."

"And don't you?" asked Paul, who had noticed hitherto that Challoner had avoided all mention of his family.

"I'll tell you, old fellow, for you're my best friend, I think, though we have not known each other very long. I don't choose to talk about my affairs as a rule, and I can't stand impertinent comments, but I'll tell you, and you'll perhaps be able to sympathize with me. My father lives at a place down in the country, as pretty a place as I ever saw, Fairwater it's called; and there we've always lived, and a good many Challoners before us, I believe; but that's all nothing. My mother died when I was quite a boy, leaving me and a sister a little younger than I am. Well, you may suppose my life

wasn't like what it had been, after that; there were no more happy days for me then. My mother and I always understood each other, and sympathized with each other; my father never did much either way. He was constantly occupied in some of the things that country gentlemen are always busy with, and took little notice of me or my sister Edith. Well, things went on in a sort of dull, gloomy way, till all at once my father informed me that he intended to marry again. I was awfully surprised, of course, for I hadn't taken much notice of him, except that he had been away from home a good deal; besides I was at Rugby then, and only at home for a short time. Well, my father *did* marry; and now you know my skeleton, Romaine; '*est mihi injusta noverca,*' my stepmother and I have never agreed, and never shall."

"It's the old story, then, about stepmothers," said Paul.

"It is so in my case, though I don't believe it's universally true," answered Challoner; "but, by Jove, it's hard upon Edith and me, to see a young woman, not much older than I am, sitting where my poor mother used to sit, and lording it over us. She isn't such a bad sort of woman if she wasn't put in a false position; but as it is—why, my home isn't a happy one, Romaine, and sometimes I feel simply wretched, that's the fact. So much malignity, and evil-speaking and lying goes on, that I wish that I for one were well away from the whole thing. But I'm boring you with all this, old fellow, like a selfish beggar as I am."

"My dear fellow," answered Paul earnestly, "I'm most glad that you have told me your trouble; two of us can bear a nuisance better than one: at all events we'll try. I've often wondered at the cause of your being gloomy and cut up, but I can easily understand it now."

"You would understand it better if you could put yourself in my place, and have the things said to you, and the letters written to you full of little petty malicious things, as I have. But never mind, I've told 'the secrets of my prison-house,' and I shall be better for it. By the by, my people are coming up here for Commemoration, so you'll have an opportunity of seeing them; at all events I want them to see *you*."

"I thought of asking my mother and sister to come up too," said Paul, "but I don't know if they can manage it."

Challoner knew the story of his friend's narrow means, for Paul had early disclosed the fact to him, so he only said now that if it could be managed it would be very pleasant to have so large a family party up together, and left Paul to manage it after his own fashion. Presently they punted themselves further up the river to Godstow, where stand the ruins of the nunnery supposed to have been the burial-place of ill-fated Fair Rosamond.

"I wonder how many of the men who row down here every day know or care anything about those ruins," said Paul, as they came into view of the ivy-covered walls of the nunnery.

"Not one in fifty, I should say," answered Challoner. "There are a class of men who think it weak and unmanly to care about such things."

"They are confounded fools, then," said Paul gruffly. "Unmanly, indeed! Can't a man be as good a man as his neighbours because he happens to know a little English history, and to take an interest in a bit of antiquity? Is it such a disgraceful thing to know something beyond the management of a boat or the breed of a bulldog?"

"But there are lots of men who have read, and taken a

class too, and yet have no feelings of that sort. There's Grindsby of Corpus, you know; he took three 'Firsts,' and yet he doesn't know an old ruin from a modern brick wall."

"I hate a mere classical machine," answered Paul; "any mere machine is bad, be he classical, mathematical, or anything else. There's Clark of our college: he's taken a First in mathematics, and yet he's the poorest, slowest, stupidest beggar you ever saw in your life—a machine, nothing more. Our men call him 'old Rhomboid.' I don't wonder at *such* men not caring for nature, or antiquity, or anything but the dry bones of their own subjects; but it does seem strange that so many men up here care for nothing beyond mere athletics, or mere grinding for the Schools."

"It's a want of proper education, I suppose," said Challoner. "They have never learnt anything beyond the work which they are examined in, and the rowing or cricketing which is to serve them for exercise. Lots of men think it sentimental humbug to care for things like your favourite ruin there."

"Well, all I can say of such people is best expressed in the words of Mr. F.'s aunt, 'I hate a fool!' You recollect her in 'Little Dorrit,' of course. I confess that I am sentimental, and I glory in it, and yet I don't fancy any fellow will accuse me of being effeminate or lackadaisical."

"I should rather think not," answered Challoner, laughing; "your long limbs don't look very womanish, I must confess. Besides, I ought to know something of your sparring powers. But come, we must get our punt back: the stream is with us, so we shan't have much work."

Paul had some doubts whether he ought to suggest the visit of his mother and sister, considering the expense it would

entail; but as they were both anxious to visit Oxford some time during his residence there, and as Paul was equally anxious to have them up, it was finally arranged that Mrs. Romaine and Maude should make their visit during this term. Accordingly, Paul engaged modest lodgings for them in grave old Holywell Street, and looked forward to their coming with all the natural pride which an Oxford man feels when his friends first visit him in his college rooms

Meantime, Paul was fully employed. In the cool of the evening there was the inevitable practice in the Torpid, from which Paul could never escape, as he was by this time acknowledged as a principal member of the crew. He found some difficulty in eluding the rest of the men after the night's pulling was over, and retiring to his own rooms to read; for most of the crew were not reading men, and when not rowing were amusing themselves. Paul, however, had an object in view, and he was not a man to be turned from his purpose; so, as soon as his jersey and other boating habiliments were thrown aside, he escaped to his rooms and sat down steadfastly to his books. He was not very popular among the men at the college barge; he was one of those men who are never very popular among young fellows of their own age. While the boating critics acknowledged the strength and pluck and steady perseverance which Paul displayed in his place in the boat, yet most of the crew shrank from their silent reserved companion, who was usually brief in his answers if civilly addressed, and uncommonly rough and caustic if anything like rudeness was attempted: good-humoured chaff he took kindly enough. The fact was that Paul didn't care a straw for the burly young giants who pulled with him in the boat. They were most of them good-

tempered stupid fellows, rather conceited perhaps, and not inclined to be very familiar with Paul unless he invited it; so, when our friend showed himself cold and reserved, they put it down in their own dull matter-of-fact minds to pride and bumptiousness, which they considered most unwarrantable in a man who was not in a rich fast set, nor in fact in any set at all.

This not being in a set makes a great difference to men at Oxford: a man who studiously avoids identifying himself with any set whatever, finds himself pretty much alone during his three or four years of residence. Those few men who saw more of Paul alone declared him a very pleasant companion, though a very queer fellow. Such a verdict is often passed by stupid people on a friend who is cleverer than themselves.

Commemoration week began with a promise of fine and settled weather, and so many anxious hearts which palpitated beneath gay summer dresses were set at rest. The fair army of lady visitors stormed grave old Oxford in unusually large force this year, and the High, which a few days before had worn its usual aspect of quiet regular business, was now gay with the bright skirts and bewitching hats and pretty sunshades of the girls. I say *girls* to avoid invidious distinctions, always unpleasant, and especially so when ladies are concerned, and also to save myself the trouble of particularizing the mammas, and even grandmammas, who were now gazing, to their dear hearts' content, on the wonders of the city; stopping to abuse the ugly front of Queen's, asking, for the sixth time within two hours, the name of University, and admiring the pretty things in the windows of the multifarious Spiers.

I need not say that Mrs. Romaine felt particularly proud

and happy as she leaned on the arm of Paul, and was paraded by that gentleman solemnly down the High. You know enough of Mrs. Romaine by this time to see that she was every inch a mother, and thought Paul a paragon, a *rara avis;* whereas you and I, dear reader, know better. Little Maude—I call her little from habit, I suppose, for she was not of a pigmy stature—looked and laughed and wondered, and plied Paul with questions, till he almost regretted that he had not got up the history of Oxford more completely, such new and puzzling queries were put to him.

"What lots of girls, and how delighted they all look!" said Maude presently, as they were coming back towards Magdalen.

"Yes, they look very jolly, I must confess," answered Paul. "I fancy girls lay themselves out to enjoy themselves at Commemoration more than anywhere else; they never seem to get tired of walking, dancing, and cider-cup."

"Oh, what a beautiful tower, Paul! this can't be anything else but Magdalen." This from Maude, who was surveying the fairest college in all Oxford with delighted eyes.

"Yes, this is Magdalen," said her brother. "On the top of that tower they sing a hymn on the first of May, which I should like to hear very well if they didn't select five in the morning for the performance, but that's rather an unseasonable hour, you know. But come, let us go in to the walk."

Who does not love Magdalen walk who has seen it in its summer beauty? Who does not remember with delight the over-arching trees, the winding path edged with flowers, the deer grouped under the giant trees in the park, and the Cherwell gliding sluggishly by under the banks?

"This part of the walk where we now are," said Paul, "is

Addison's walk. Here he used to wander, in his college days, long before he was the Right Honourable Joseph, Secretary of State. I think he was at Queen's first, and then came here: they could do those sort of things in his day."

"What a pretty girl; Paul, do you see her?" said Maude, who had listened very demurely to this scrap of information—"there, walking with another lady and two gentlemen."

"Why, that's Challoner, and she must be Challoner's sister," answered Paul.

Challoner's sister! A very ordinary common-place remark, is it not? Yet pass it not over lightly, for the person to whom it refers is of much importance in this history. This, then, was the Edith of whom Frank Challoner had once or twice spoken. Let us see what Edith was like. She was leaning on her brother's arm, and her hat shaded and partly concealed her face. It would no doubt be more in accordance with the usage of romance, were I to devote three or even four pages to a detailed description of this young lady, dwelling with pre-Raphaelite minuteness on every shade of her hair, and passing expression of her eyes; but I must run the risk of breaking all known rules of story-telling, and make my description very simple indeed. Of course, you have determined that Edith Challoner is to be a heroine—not the only one however, but she will be undoubtedly one of my heroines —so imagine her, if you can: a fair complexioned pretty girl, with none of your wax-doll smiling faces, but a thoughtful, earnest, gentle face, such as we see sometimes in a picture, and always love to look long at; a face which makes us think of pure love and womanly devotion, and suggests a strong denial to those strictures on the sex which make out most women to be weak, frivolous, and silly. In repose, Edith's

face was very thoughtful, almost melancholy perhaps; but, when interested by conversation, her large deep blue eyes sparkled, and her every feature played in unison with the emotions which the subject excited. But I am insensibly dropping into the lengthy description (so strong is the force of habit), so let me say that her hair was fair, golden in fact, though neither the "threaded gold," nor the "sun-kissed locks," which poets are so fond of telling us about: and having said so much, my readers must, if they have a leaning that way, fill up the portrait for themselves.

Frank Challoner at once came forward to speak to Paul, and mutual introductions followed. Mr. Challoner and his wife began to talk common-place, as is the custom on such occasions. Paul found himself beside Edith, and Challoner talked to Maude. No one talked so much or so continually as Mrs. Challoner, who, leaning on her husband's arm, addressed herself to everybody on every possible subject. She was a little thin woman, with thin lips, and a long thin nose, which was on the present occasion, owing doubtless to the hot weather, tinged with something more than a suspicion of redness. She was very gaily dressed, and in a very juvenile style; and frequently patted her husband, and even Mrs. Romaine, with her mauve sun-shade when very interested in conversation. Artless creature! She seemed to find everybody *so* agreeable; in fact, she said as much more than once. Mr. Challoner was a tall handsome man, whose bearing was that of a gentleman, though somewhat of the stiff-backed school. He was always courteous, using a stilted many-worded kind of courtesy; but also he was always cold, never familiar, and never without his stately manner.

I shall not offer to relate the talk which passed between

this party as they walked round Magdalen and Christ Church meadows. It was chiefly about Oxford, and how they enjoyed it, with such exclamations as: "Oh, what a delicious bit of landscape! Do you sketch, Mr. Romaine? I'm sure you must?" or, "There's that dear old Christ Church again; pray tell me all about the great bell—Tom, is it?—for Frank never will tell me about it;" and so forth: such exclamations always emanating from Mrs. Challoner, who was *so* impulsive, as she told Paul presently. By and by Challoner asked the Romaines to come to his rooms to lunch; and when Paul demurred to this, wishing to keep his friends to himself, Mr. Challoner pressed the invitation in a stately manner, and Mrs. Challoner in an impulsive manner, which finally overcame Mrs. Romaine and Maude, though it made no impression save one of annoyance on our friend Paul.

"Well, Paul, what do you think of your friend Challoner's relatives?" asked Mrs. Romaine that evening.

"Why I pity him, poor fellow, and quite understand all that he has hinted at," answered Paul.

"Then you don't like them?" said his mother.

"Like them! why the father is a pompous lump of animated ice, and the stepmother—poor Challoner! I wonder she has not turned his hair grey."

"I don't see much sign of it yet," said Maude laughing; "but come, Paul, what of your friend's sister? Is he to be pitied on her account too?"

"No; it strikes me that's the one link that binds him to his home," Paul said thoughtfully. "I daresay she's a comfort to him, she seems sensible enough." And with that they went to bed.

And Edith, did she find no more flattering expression for her new acquaintance? Alas! dear curious reader, I know not even whether she thought Paul was sensible or not, or whether she thought about him at all.

The engrossing round of Commemoration pleasures came crowding upon our friends, and although the Romaines by no means visited all the balls, concerts, flower-shows, and theatricals, which are crammed into that week of holiday-making, yet their time was fully occupied. There was Show-Sunday, with its ecclesiastical display in St. Mary's, the Doctors solemnly marching in with their scarlet gowns, the Vice-Chancellor with his mace-bearers, the Proctors in their huge velvet sleeves and long white hoods. Then the sermon followed, preached by one of Oxford's most approved divines; and if any one present felt inclined to pronounce the discourse dry, there was plenty to look at in the church. The galleries were crowded with the black mass of undergraduates; below were the seats of the Doctors and Heads of Houses, the Masters and the Bachelors; and the sides of the church were lined with the bright bonnets and still brighter faces of the ladies. Show-Sunday concluded with the promenade in the Broad Walk, beneath the giant elms, whose branches have overshadowed Shelley, and Heber, and Addison, and a hundred others whose names are immortal. Here, on this fair summer evening, when the sinking sun shot its deep red rays through the thick leafage of the elms, and flashed golden red on the tree-fringed waters of the Cherwell, all the gay crowd of Oxford visitors were assembled. So dense was the crowd that the two streams of people could proceed up and down only at a veritable snail's pace. All ranks of University men

were there, from the white-haired Master of some ancient college to the smooth-faced freshman of a few weeks' standing. Bright-eyed girls laughed and prattled as they hung on the arms of stately Masters, who, sooth to say, seemed to like their position well enough. A few unfortunate College Fellows, who had no friends up to visit them, stalked about moodily; and among these was the Dean of St. Chrys'tom's, who surveyed the scene through his invariable eye-glass with an expression which, if meant to be prepossessing, fell very short of its object.

Paul and his friends were walking in company with the Challoners; and Percy Cheyne, who had been introduced to Mrs. Romaine and Maude, was of the party. He had no friends up in Oxford this term, and Mrs. Romaine had begged that he would accompany them to the Broad Walk, which Percy was only too glad to do; and now in the thick of the crowd you might have noticed, had you been there, that the young man was walking with little Maude. There was something about Percy which made you like him at once, yet you could scarcely tell what that something was. He was frank, bold in his talk, always light-hearted, thoughtless, and full of fun. You felt that you could not place any great confidence in so heedless a fellow, and yet his gay pleasant talk on every subject (for Percy was a clever and a tolerably well-read man for all his careless habits) invariably delighted you, and made you forget that the same man would probably go and do some foolish thing before night. Maude knew little about Percy's short comings in this respect; but she knew on this bright summer evening, when the "bonny Christ Church bells" were pealing joyously over the green meadows and the quiet river, that her companion was the pleasantest she had

ever known, and she began to realize the fact that there might be other heroes in the world as well as that great broad-shouldered Paul, who was towering above the heads of the crowded walkers.

Paul, too, found Edith Challoner equally "sensible" on this occasion; and though she took him gently to task for one or two bursts of strong language on certain abuses which they discussed, yet Mr. Paul took his scolding very quietly, a trait by no means common in our friend's character. Mrs. Challoner made several attempts to fix herself upon Paul, but that gentleman avoided all her efforts with consummate generalship; in consequence of which poor Mrs. Romaine had to undergo an hour of the gushing twittering nonsense, seasoned here and there with a little spice of ill-nature, which formed Mrs. Challoner's usual form of conversation. As for Frank, he talked a little with his father, looked at Percy Cheyne and his pretty companion, and said very little to anybody.

The last day of Commemoration came, the great day of all, the real *Encænia*, or Celebration of Founders and Benefactors, as the Oxford Calendar calls it. Paul had obtained tickets for the ladies' gallery, and now delivered his mother and sister to the care of Mrs. Challoner, whilst he, with Frank and Percy Cheyne, betook himself to the undergraduates' door of the Sheldonian Theatre, ready to take part in the desperate "squash," as it is aptly named, which always takes place at Commemoration. Arriving early at the place, Paul and his two friends were enabled to stand close to the gates, and get a good grasp of the iron bars. Every moment the crowd of undergraduates kept increasing, and the pressure in the midst

of a hot June day was sufficiently overpowering. Suddenly the iron gates were opened, and the crowd plunged in, only to be stopped by the great wooden doors of the theatre, against which several fists began to beat lustily. Presently a creaking within, and a shout of "Look out in front!" announced that the doors were about to be opened. Another moment and they were thrown back, and in charged Paul with six or seven hundred men at his back, who bore him literally up the iron corkscrew staircase, which leads up to the undergraduates' gallery "among the gods."

From this exalted position, our friends looked down on the motley scene below. The area of the theatre was fast filling with M.A.'s and B.A.'s, and their male friends; whilst the ladies' gallery seemed like one great flower-garden as far as faces were concerned; and as for dresses I can only compare the scene to the well-known windows of Swan and Edgar in the midst of the London season. Below the ladies, on their own particular benches, were seated the grandees of the day: Bishops and Archbishops, side by side with a foreign ambassador in a gay uniform; with scientific lions, and literary lions, and diplomatic lions, a whole menagerie—only these were the true animal, not such specimens as we saw once at Mrs. Chunter's house in Sloane Street.

The Oxford Saturnalia has begun in good earnest, the whole theatre is at the mercy of the dense crowd of undergraduates who throng the gallery, and who pour forth a continual stream of chaff, mingled with ringing cheers for "The ladies in blue," "The ladies in pink," "The unmarried ladies," and "All the ladies."

A keen watch is kept for any luckless intruder below, who shall, moved thereto by the heat of the weather, appear in a

white hat, or a coat lighter than the black or "subfusc" hue which is prescribed by the Oxford statutes. Such a daring individual is attacked with cries of "Turn him out!"—"A white hat!"—or still more personally, "*Will* you go out, sir?" This goes on for some time, and then enters a goodly procession—the Vice-Chancellor, the Doctors, the Proctors, the noblemen in their gold-laced gowns, and the notable personages who are to be invested with the honorary degree of D.C.L. for all sorts of services: one for bringing a bill into Parliament, the advantages of which very few people saw; another for turning a bill *out* of Parliament, apparently only for the reason that it contained common-sense provisions; another for having written a book; and a fourth because he had never done anything at all.

The hubbub ceases for a time, the degrees are conferred, and the recipients thereof greeted with remarks more or less complimentary from the gallery. Then the graver and sterner of the two Proctors is entreated to sing a popular song by some one in the same exalted watch-tower: and then the prize essays are recited, from two pulpits, the Latin compositions on one side of the theatre, the English on the other. The Latin essay is applauded at first, and then, as its monotonous sentences become wearisome, the author is sharply requested to "cut it short." The Newdigate is listened to more attentively, as it is always a favourite, and as the nervous poet delivers his trembling lines in the true sing-song style of recitation, there is a general silence, broken occasionally by clapping and cheering. And so, with more shouting and laughing and cracking of jokes, the Commemoration ends, and the old Sheldonian Theatre is left to repose in the silence and dust of the Long Vacation.

Before our friends parted, Paul Romaine had accepted an invitation to visit Challoner, at Fairwater Park, during "the Long," and Percy Cheyne had promised to come over for a day or two to Inglefell, from Newhampton, whither he expected to go in the course of the autumn. And so they parted, and went their several ways.

CHAPTER XI.

A DARK PROCEEDING.

Mr. Philip Hyllyer had paid several visits to his lonely friend at Gaston's Folly since we last heard of him. Robert Gaston was evidently fast yielding to the attacks of a disease which had at first been called into existence by the excesses of the patient himself; but in spite of his pain, and the certainty of approaching death, Gaston refused to see any physician, and indeed saw no one except the two old domestics who had been with him in Australia, and Philip Hyllyer.

Under the careful eye of the last-named personage, Robert Gaston had refrained from carrying his half-formed purpose into action, and leaving his property, or at least part of it, to the Romaines. But though no new will had been made, Mr. Hyllyer was by no means certain that such a document might not yet be drawn up by Gaston before he finally departed from the scene of his troubles and vices. Hyllyer had a strong distrust of that article called conscience, about which Gaston had spoken once or twice, and he felt anxious and doubtful lest that, to him, incomprehensible feeling should prompt Gaston to alter his will in favour of his cousins.

When not visiting his friend on the banks of the Thames, Mr. Hyllyer was to be seen nearly every day in some part or

other of London. His face showed that he was ill at ease, and though, if spoken to by an acquaintance, he at once assumed the smile and tone of one who is "fancy-free," yet his restless bloodshot eyes, his contracted lips and white cheeks told a different story, and were quite sufficient to give the lie to his smiles and his soft-spoken phrases.

Mr. Hyllyer seemed to be very busy about this time, and his business, whatever it was, took him to some of the dryest, darkest, and most musty lanes in the whole city of London, where he visited men whose dryness, darkness (morally speaking), and mustiness were quite in keeping with the character of their dwelling-places. One person upon whom Mr. Hyllyer most frequently called was Mr. Ragford, solicitor, late of the firm of Slingsby and Ragford, from which firm Mr. Slingsby had retired, perhaps because he had made his fortune, or perhaps for some other more cogent reason; at all events the task of elucidating the mysteries and asserting the majesty of the law to all who were foolish enough to interfere with it, devolved entirely on Mr. Alexander Ragford.

This gentleman lived in one of the most breathless, most dusty, and altogether most unpleasant of all the courts which Mr. Hyllyer was in the habit of visiting. The outer office of Alexander Ragford commanded a view of a dead wall, so dead in its appearance that the bricks which composed it might have come from Herculaneum, or any other defunct city of antiquity. The inner office, the shrine of Mr. Ragford's legal oracles, commanded a view of nothing, being closed in by dingy blinds which put out the eyes of the one melancholy window most effectually. On the walls of this *sanctum*, if such a name can be applied to an attorney's office, appeared an almanack which, though containing the days and months of the current

year, was yet so brown and dust-stained, and mouldy, that it might have been the veritable calendar of "The Year One," supposing that such useful things then existed. A dreary clock ticked loudly and monotonously on a bracket in one corner; and in a black, hard, horsehair-covered chair, with his back to this dreary clock, sat Mr. Philip Hyllyer, on a certain day, talking to his friend and legal adviser, Mr. Ragford, who was sitting opposite to him before a large office table. Mr. Alexander Ragford was a mean-looking little man, who looked very much as though he had at some remote period been rolled alternately in a bed and a bag of feathers, and had never taken off his clothes since. He was *fluffy* from head to foot; his hair was thick and dusty, and full of bits of fluffy matter; his black coat was dingy, and plentifully sprinkled with fluff; so were his trowsers and his boots. But it was Mr. Ragford's face which was more fluffy than any other part; its colour was a dirty yellow, inclining to whity-brown, and all about the cheeks and chin were little sickly tufts of fluffy matter, not hair, for they were quite unlike the bristles of unshorn men. Mr. Ragford had a peculiarity besides this outward peculiarity of fluffiness: he always spoke under protest. Though, as a lawyer, he was of course obliged to give an opinion, yet he always gave it under protest, as though it were an impression in his own mind which he made public, but by no means wished his clients to act upon it simply as his recommendation.

It would seem that Mr. Hyllyer and his legal friend were not quite agreed on the subject which they had been discussing, or else that they were not in a hurry to arrive at any conclusion. The attorney was thoughtfully stroking his nose

with the moist feathers of a long quill pen, and occasionally ceasing to write nothing on a sheet of foolscap which lay before him. Hyllyer was gnawing his finger in a manner which showed all his white teeth to perfection, and made his likeness to a wild beast more than ordinarily striking.

"I know he'll do it," said Hyllyer at last, taking out his finger to allow vent for his words, and then falling to gnawing it again worse than ever.

"Very possibly, my dear sir," replied the legal adviser, in a tone which neither conveyed assent nor dissent.

"I feel convinced that he'll do it," said Hyllyer again. "He's just the sort of man to have a return of piety with his other ailments, and then he'll make a new will, and good-bye to my fortune for ever! But it must be prevented, and the question is, Ragford, *how* is it to be prevented?"

"My good sir," replied the lawyer more deprecatingly than ever, "you ask me how is a man to be prevented from making a new will? I answer, that I fancy—pray understand me, I don't affirm this, but I fancy that such a thing is impossible."

"You know what I mean," said Hyllyer, impatiently. "Of course the man's a free agent, but the will, if made, must not operate."

"My dear sir," said Mr. Ragford, "I can't allow you to remain for a moment under a mistake of this kind. If a will of a later date than that in my possession is found—mind, I say if such a will is *found*—it will operate, and the former will be null and void."

"I know all about that," said Hyllyer. "If the will is *found*, you say? I think I take your meaning; it needn't, you know"—

"Stop, my dear sir, I beg," interposed Mr. Ragford, "don't misunderstand me. What I said was, that *if* a later will were found it would take effect to the exclusion of the former. I said no more, you will remember."

Mr. Hyllyer had paid little attention to his legal adviser's last words. He was lost in thought; suddenly his face assumed an expression of settled resolve, as of a man who has turned a subject over in his mind, and has come to a fixed determination about it. "I think I see my way clearer, Ragford," he said, getting up hastily; "I won't detain you any longer now."

"I'm glad you *do* see your way, my dear sir," said Ragford, rising too, and smiling as he looked hard at Hyllyer's face. "Perhaps you think I haven't been very explicit in my advice to-day. I'll add a morsel of counsel now: be very cautious what you do, and how you do it. Good day, my dear sir; good day!"

That same evening, Mr. Philip Hyllyer walked into a small public house by the river side, down Limehouse way, a miserable place, frequented chiefly by the dock-labourers and long-shore men, whose meat and drink came from the black filthy waters of the river. Mr. Hyllyer seemed well known, however, to the keeper of the house, a one-eyed man, with a nose so vividly red that it actually glowed in the dark corner of the bar like a red-hot coal.

"Anybody here for me, landlord?" asked Mr. Hyllyer.

"Yes, to be sure; there's Mike Rawkins in the third box there, beyond the gas-lamp; he's after you, sir," answered the landlord of "The Old Red Barge," for by no less imposing a name was his tavern distinguished.

"Bring two glasses of brandy and water then, will you,

landlord? at once," said Hyllyer, and walked forward to the box, where, with his arms leaning on a little dirty table, his ragged fur cap pulled over his eyes, and a short black pipe between his teeth, sat Mike Rawkins, the hoarse boatman who rowed Hyllyer down to Gaston's Folly on a certain night of which you have heard, and often enough since that night too.

"Well, Mike, how are you getting on?" said Hyllyer, as he entered the box.

"Middlin'," was the sententious answer, given in a low and excessively hoarse voice, almost a whisper in fact.

"Had anything to drink?"

"Pot o' porter," growled the sententious Mike.

"Would you like some brandy and water?"

Only at these words, as if they had contained some spell, did Mike Rawkins lift up his head and say, with an approach to animation, "I believe yer, hot and strong."

The brandy and water arriving at this moment, Mr. Rawkins seized upon his glass and tossed off the greater part of its contents at one gulp, and then, looking at Hyllyer, said in a hoarser whisper than ever: "Now, master, I'm ready."

"Well then, business!" said Hyllyer, lowering his voice so that no listener could have heard his words amidst the noisy revel which the other occupants of the room were keeping up. "What's the latest news down the river?"

"Last night him as you knows on was wuss, considerable wuss; had a doctor again, for the second time. Doctor came over in a gig ever so far: doctor's boy told me that the party was very bad, a werry bad case, so his master said. I waited a bit, and presently the doctor hisself comes out; so I goes to him and says: 'Yer pardon, sir, but how's the poor gent,

sir? I used to work for him, and a kind master he was.' Well, the doctor says, 'He's mortal bad, my man; he'll be gone before night, I expect; and yet I can't make him go to bed, he's bothering himself about some writing or other, I think.' With that the doctor went off. So I kept about the place all day, first looking into one window and then into another, and another; it was easy enough, for there was no police about, nor nobody else either. At last, when I was looking into one room where I'd seen the sick party sitting before, I saw him call in the two old servants, the man and his wife, and he showed them a bit of paper, and then wrote something, and afterwards they wrote something too, and he put the paper—"

"Where did he put the paper?" asked Hyllyer eagerly.

"Why, on the table, master," said Rawkins, finishing his brandy and water; "and then he seemed to be took awful bad, for he turned just like a corpse, and they led him out of the room. I left soon after, but he wasn't dead then: I managed to find that out."

"Is that all?" asked Hyllyer.

"That's all," answered Mike Rawkins, refilling his pipe.

"You can't read, can you?" said Hyllyer, after a moment's silence.

"Not nothing to speak of," answered Mr. Rawkins, "leastways not beyond large print."

Mr. Hyllyer was again silent for a little while, then he said: "You have done very well, Mike, quite as well as I could wish; but I haven't done with you yet. You must be at the old spot, with your boat, to-morrow at four o'clock, and mind that you do whatever is told you by the people who will come in my name. Do you understand?"

"All right, sir, I'll be there," replied Rawkins, without removing the black pipe which was once more between his teeth.

"Well then, good night, Mike; here's something to buy tobacco till we meet again." Mike's hand closed over the money which Mr. Hyllyer placed in it, and he nodded an adieu to his patron.

That same evening Mr. Hyllyer went into one of the metropolitan telegraph offices, and despatched a message; and having so done, he retired home to his lodgings.

At an early hour on the following morning, two gentlemen came to call on Mr. Hyllyer. They are both known to us, the one being Captain Halkett, he whom Paul Romaine expelled so ignominiously from the ball-room at Grey Abbots, and the other being the Captain's particular friend, Mr. Slingsby. Mr. Hyllyer received the visitors with his usual smiling verbosity, which contrasted strongly with the roughness of Halkett, and the taciturn behaviour of Slingsby.

"I got your telegram last night," said Captain Halkett, "and I supposed something was up."

"Something *is* up, my dear fellow," answered the smiling Hyllyer, "I want you and Slingsby on a matter of very particular business."

"Something for your own good, and not for ours, I suppose," said Halkett.

"On the contrary, it is quite a mutual affair, and will benefit us both."

"Not equally, I suppose?" interposed Halkett.

"Well, not exactly, but it will benefit you and Slingsby considerably, I assure you."

"Let us hear it, my dear sir," said Mr. Slingsby.

"You have heard me speak, I think," said Hyllyer, smiling more than ever, "of a certain friend of mine, whose heir I am to be on his own promises?"

"O yes, we've heard of it, though you were always deuced close about it, Hyllyer," said Halkett.

"Well, my friends, I have very nearly lost that fortune through an absurd weakness of my poor friend, who was always a very weak man. It appears that he has just made a will, made it *in extremis*, at the very point of death, which will, I expect, ruin all my prospects, my fortune being left in a former will. Now, my dear friends, not to beat about the bush, I want that last will, and I must have it."

"Then why don't you go and get it?" asked Mr. Slingsby.

"Because," answered Hyllyer, "I believe that my friend is either already dead or just at the point of death. I shall be sent for at his death, and other people will be about; so that if the will were missed suspicion would point at once to me. As I shall be heir to the property, it is, of course, necessary that I should be very careful to preserve a sort of respectability, you know."

"Then you want us to go and steal the will for you, I suppose?" said Captain Halkett.

"Now, really, Halkett, you shouldn't use such objectionable expressions," replied the smiling Hyllyer; "it's quite unnecessary, and often very unpleasant besides. What I want is, that you and Slingsby should go down to my friend's house, before the news of his death is sent to me and others, and quietly possess yourselves of this will, and bring it to me."

"But surely, Hyllyer," said Mr. Slingsby, "you don't suppose that Halkett and I can lend ourselves to such a pro-

ceeding? It's a most grave offence, I can assure you; besides consider the scandal of it."

"Nonsense!" said Hyllyer sharply; "you can't get over me with your cant, Slingsby, so don't try it; a man who has been struck off the rolls isn't over nice about scandal, and Halkett knows that *I* know too much about him to attempt any such talk with me. The real question is, what your reward shall be."

"Yes, and what our risk will be," said Halkett. "I'm not going to run the risk of being transported to get you a fortune, Hyllyer."

"There is no risk," replied Hyllyer. "The house is utterly secluded, no one in it but two old and half-blind servants, and I have a master-key which will admit you; so there's not much risk there. It's mere child's play; and when fifty pounds is to be got by it, you won't hesitate, I'm sure."

"Fifty pounds each?" said Halkett.

"No, no, my dear fellow! be reasonable: fifty pounds is a large sum, and one which I fancy you both want rather badly."

"Stop, Mr. Hyllyer," said Slingsby, "don't trouble to go any further. Halkett can, of course, do as he likes; but if he takes my advice, he'll have nothing to do with this matter. For my part, I'll not do it for twice the sum."

"Very well, sir," said Mr. Hyllyer coldly; "then somebody else shall, and you'll lose a good friend. The will shall never benefit the Romaines, if I take it myself."

"The Romaines! Did you say the Romaines?" asked Halkett, very eagerly.

"To be sure I did; those are the people who will get my fortune, as I expect, by this new will. But why do you ask?"

"Never mind, I'll do the thing for you," said Halkett resolutely; "I'd do it for half the money if there was twice the risk."

Slingsby drew the Captain aside and spoke very earnestly with him for some minutes: then they both came up to Hyllyer and declared their readiness to accept the mission entrusted to them. Hyllyer proceeded to give his friends some minute directions concerning their journey, and declared that he should wait till that night to receive the will from them, but not at his lodgings; so that if news of Gaston's death arrived, it could not reach him and render an immediate departure to the house necessary.

That same day, about dusk, two men wearing broad felt hats, and looking very much like tourists, or travelling artists, landed at the little quay near Gaston's Folly, and were accompanied by the boatman Rawkins. The two men slouched about, out of sight, while Rawkins went up to the house to see the state of affairs there.

"I don't like this work at all, Halkett," said Slingsby to his friend, as they skulked behind an old rotting barge which lay aground among the rushes and mud, "and I fancy you would not like it either if your friend, young Romaine, was not concerned."

"Perhaps not," said Halkett; "however, I *do* like the work now, and I mean to go on with it."

Presently Mike Rawkins returned. "It's all quiet enough," he said, hoarsely, "the old man and woman are asleep in the kitchen, and there's not a soul stirring."

"All right then, come along," said Halkett; "and mind, Mike, if you hear us whistle, get the sculls out like a shot, and be ready to have us off in an instant."

"All right, sir! I'll be ready."

Very slouching and skulking looked the two men as they advanced to the house; their very manner would have made the most unobservant of policemen take them in charge for being on the premises "with a felonious purpose." The master-key provided by Hyllyer admitted them at once; and so noiselessly did they open the door, that a burglar's heart would have warmed towards them could he have seen their entry. Halkett now produced a rough plan of the rooms on the first floor, and by its aid the two men at once proceeded to a room which looked out towards the country, at the back of the house, and appeared to have been used as a kind of office, or place of business. A large table contained a number of scattered papers, some few being tied up more methodically in bundles and docketed. A door opened from one end of the room into an inner chamber, and towards this the intruders cast an anxious glance: instinct seemed to tell them that there, dead or alive, lay the man they had come to plunder. The room was nearly dark when they entered, but a candle stood on the table, and a fire burnt low in the grate. Halkett, seeing that the shutters of the room were closed, hastily lighted the candle and began to search the table, bidding Slingsby examine a bureau which stood unlocked in one corner of the room. With an eager and trembling hand, Halkett turned over each paper on the table, and unfastened each bundle. His face grew paler than ordinary, as his search was unrewarded. At last he opened two small drawers in the table, and from one drew forth several loose papers; a glance at the first paper showed him the will, and a hasty perusal showed him more—that a large fortune was therein left to Mrs. Romaine and her children. Slingsby turned

suddenly just as Halkett had finished his rapid reading of the will. The captain held up a paper, with a significant sign to Slingsby, and then, as his friend advanced hastily, he deliberately held the paper in the flame of the candle, and then pressed his hand upon the blackened ashes.

"What have you done that for?" asked Slingsby, in a whisper.

"Hush!" said his friend, closing the drawer quickly, "we must be off, the thing's done."

Cautiously they left the house, unquestioned and unseen, unless the spirit of that dead man yonder saw them and howled in anguish, for Robert Gaston was lying dead and cold in that inner chamber, and his old servants, weary with watching, were sleeping on, ignorant that their master was gone at last.

"What the deuce did you burn the will for?" asked Mr. Slingsby, as they hurried down to the boat.

"Because I'm not such a fool as to run the risk of having it found upon me," answered Halkett. "The thing's done and that's enough: we needn't run unnecessary risks. Now Mike, give way."

Late that night, Mr. Hyllyer met his two friends by appointment in a tavern in the city. He was inclined to be angry at not having the will put into his hands, but Halkett convinced him of the soundness of his reasons for not carrying such matters about with him, and Slingsby had seen it burnt, so that the matter was settled.

On the following day Mr. Philip Hyllyer, and Mr. Ragford, solicitor, received the news of Robert Gaston's death from the surgeon who had attended him; and Mr. Ragford, in company with the executor, a respectable man of business, went down

to set things in order. Mr. Hyllyer also went down, but his visit was to the two old servants, Davy and his wife, the witnesses to the will. The old woman was almost imbecile, and her memory gone, so that little was to be feared from her; and as for old Davy, certain arguments put to him by Mr. Hyllyer were of such a potent character, that the old man had less memory for any past events than his old wife, and retired from the scene immediately after Mr. Gaston's funeral.

No new will being discovered after a minute search, and all preliminaries being settled, Mr. Philip Hyllyer found himself a man of large property, and, not having such a thing as a conscience, quite at his ease.

CHAPTER XII.

PAUL ROMAINE'S SUMMER HOLIDAY.

THE events of the last chapter took place in the spring, when Paul, profoundly ignorant of the fortune which he was so near obtaining, was rowing manfully in the boat races. Now it was June, and Paul was at home at Inglefell. Every place is pleasant in June, wherever there is earth enough, and air enough, for a tree to grow in; so that Inglefell, which stands in one of our fairest counties, looked especially pleasant in the soft summer weather. The village is conveniently situated, not too near a town to lose any of the fine air and quiet of the country, and not too far from shops and people to be cut off from all intercourse with the rest of the world. Grey Abbots is five miles off, large, wealthy, and flourishing, with plenty of interesting buildings, and especially the ruins of the old Grey Friars' monastery whence the town derived its name.

Seven miles from Grey Abbots, and six from Inglefell by another road, is Newhampton, the cathedral city. It is like most of its class, quiet, monotonous, rather dull perhaps, with a sort of sombre decent solemnity hanging over it, which never fails to recall recollections of the old days of mitred

abbots and shaven monks, and of the great men who are sleeping quietly within the solemn precincts of the cathedral.

The most ordinary sounds in Newhampton are the tinkling of the many church chimes, and the boom of the great cathedral bell, summoning the pious inhabitants to matins or evensong. A little excitement is now and then caused by the presence of a regiment quartered in the barracks, and during the stay of the military, society in Newhampton is led by the two ruling elements of the church and the army; at other times the clergy have it all their own way. The Bishop of Newhampton was at this time Doctor Lordly, a very old and somewhat pompous Bishop, fond of his own way, like many other people who have not attained to the mitre. The Dean was Doctor Vincent, a gentle, kindly old gentleman, who tried hard to please everybody and make everybody agree; and need I say that he succeeded in making a great many enemies, and was constantly referred to as the cause of many strifes and dissensions? The railway came direct from London to Newhampton, and there was a branch to Grey Abbots; so that you could reach Inglefell from either station: only the drive from Newhampton to the village was by far the prettier, as you crossed the river Ingle at Sunnybridge, and passed by the picturesque village of Elton-in-the-valley.

The roses were blooming again at Inglefell Cottage, reminding the Romaines that a year had passed since Paul had gone to Oxford. When Paul himself thought over that past year, he was almost surprised at the new impressions which he had formed, and the new lessons he had learnt; lessons which Dons and students, quiet college life, and noisy college life, the aspect of the place, and the services of the church had all combined to teach him. He had always been self-

reliant; he was now more than ever able to fight his own battle, for he had learnt that at Oxford, as in the world, every one must stand alone. The good and the evil lie before men "where to choose." Advice may be given, precept enforced by example; but the actual choice, the living the life, is left to the man, and to him alone. New scenes and new talk had forced themselves on Paul's notice in this year; he had heard things freely conversed about which are never mooted by schoolboys, except in secret, and generally with a certain amount of shamefacedness. He had had temptations thrown in his way openly and frequently; temptations which he had never known at Eton, and which never enter within the pure precincts of home; and from them Paul had turned away undefiled. The squalid misery and the flaunting vices of the streets had no allurements for him.

And yet Paul was no saint. Such characters are often drawn in stories of college life, but they are very untrue; they are inconsistent with the character of the world, and even more so with university life. I am not even free to call Paul a religious man; for though a man can be so called who has been carefully taught in a Christian family, and who on leaving it has lost no respect for things sacred, certain it is that our friend had not become more devout since his year's residence at Oxford, at least not outwardly; and yet his dislike for a blasphemous speech was as strong as ever, only excelled by his hatred of a warning voice and a mournful groan uttered over every passage of Scripture not used in a sermon. Of *cant* in every form, in word, in look, or act, Paul had a most rooted and most demonstrative hatred. He would rave for half an hour about a groaning pietist, or a would-be Puritan; and yet I very much doubt whether Paul, in spite

of all his external carelessness in abusing sets and forms was not more really conscious of religious feeling, *internally*, than when he entered Oxford, though he was certainly given to saying very strange things about many subjects, as we know from a certain talk of his with Challoner. What Paul might have been under other circumstances, if he had not had the love and the admiration of his mother and Maude to help him and to keep him right, I cannot pretend to say; but I fear he would have been very different. What should we be, think you, were every rose cropped up out of our path to-morrow?

Paul had promised to visit Challoner, at Fairwater, early in July; and a letter came on the last day of June, fixing the time, and urging Paul to come. Mrs. Romaine had been much pleased with the little she had seen of Challoner; and though Percy Cheyne, by his brilliant and versatile talk, was more likely to please people on a first acquaintance, and *had* pleased Paul's mother excessively, yet the friendship which Challoner felt for her son, and the good influence which Paul himself confessed had been exercised over him, could not fail to place the young man high in the gentle mother's good opinion. What mother can dislike the person who loves her son? So Mrs. Romaine was very anxious that Paul should accept the invitation, and go at once; perhaps she had ulterior thoughts and hopes, founded on the new connexion, for mothers are always scheming and building castles for their children to inhabit. Paul went accordingly, and arrived, after a long journey, in quite another part of the country, which was all new to him; and, on alighting at the station, found the Challoners' carriage ready to carry him to Fairwater Park, nearly three miles distant.

Paul had plenty of opportunity for judging of the exterior

of Fairwater as the carriage proceeded slowly up a hill, from which a wide and varied landscape could be seen on both sides of the road. The servant pointed with his whip, to the valley on the right hand side, and said, after an introductory touch of his hat, "Yonder's Fairwater, sir: there's the park gates, among the elms." Paul looked, and saw lying far below him a moderately large park, well stocked with trees, which from their size had evidently stood there for ages. A glimpse of a large white house could be at times caught, but the thick foliage of the avenue soon shut it out entirely from Paul's view. He could, however, see a fine stretch of water, spanned by a handsome stone bridge, and had no difficulty in deciding that this was the Fair Water from which the estate was named. The carriage now turned aside from the hill, and, after traversing a pleasant shady road for about half a mile, passed through the gates at Fairwater Park. Very pleasant to a hot and tired traveller, after the dust and glaring July sun, did the tall over-arching trees appear; and visions of quiet *siestas*, and pleasant rambles down some of the green glades which lay on either side of the avenue, crossed Paul's mind as he lay back in the carriage.

Our friend found Challoner himself at the hall door ready to welcome him, and to conduct him to the presence of the other members of the family. Mr. Challoner the elder received Paul with a mixture of state and cordiality. To say he was warm in his greeting would not be true, warmth being a quality which he did not possess, at least for his friends; but he was as cordial as he knew how to be, and shook hands with Paul, just allowing his fingers to close lightly upon the young man's brown fist. Mrs. Challoner was delighted, of course, to see Paul: "It is so good of you to leave that

charming mamma of yours, and that pretty sister, to come and see us; you won't find us *half* so lively, I'm afraid, but we must *try* what we can do to amuse you, and dear Frank must show you all our poor sights, you know."

Dear Frank had gone out of the room as soon as his step-mother had begun to speak: he came back presently, however, and looked at Paul talking to Edith. Edith did not gush out as Mrs. Challoner had done, nor was she stately and frigid like her father; but she smiled pleasantly on Paul, and began to talk to him quietly and sensibly; and, will it be believed? she did not talk about the weather! Presently, Frank led the way to the library, Edith and Paul following; whilst Mrs. Challoner, to our friends' great relief, remained in the drawing-room.

The library was a particularly pleasant room; its large French windows opened on to the smooth lawn of the park; and near the windows there were flower-beds and rustic baskets, all ablaze now with geraniums and calceolarias, and blue lobelia, and sweet-scented heliotrope. Beyond these lay the park, with its trees and cool shady stretches of greensward; and by a path which sloped downwards to the left you could get to the lake, which was visible from the side windows of the library. Paul was admiring the flowers, of which he was very fond, when Edith Challoner said: "Do you really care for flowers, Mr. Romaine, or are you only saying all this because you think it the correct thing to say?"

"I assure you that I am as fond of flowers as the Mexicans were in Montezuma's time: flowers and children make up all the poetry of earth, what little there is of it. If I had thought it the correct thing to say all this, I am very much afraid,

Miss Challoner, that I shouldn't have said it. You like flowers of course?"

"O yes! these are all mine, and I attend to them myself. Why I asked you so doubtfully about your love for flowers was that I find very few people who care for them much, except to smell now and then, and as a sort of elegant furniture in a garden or house."

"I know the sort of people you mean," said Paul; "flowers are to them things which grow and smell, and that's all. But I hope you didn't class me among that wretched order of beings?"

"O no! I didn't class you at all," said Edith. "I'm very glad to find that you do agree with me in finding something more in flowers than mere look and smell. Frank is of our way of thinking too."

"Yes, I'm one of you certainly," said Challoner, turning towards them. "I agree with what Longfellow says somewhere,—

> "'Spake full well, in language quaint and olden,
> One who dwelleth by the castled Rhine,
> When he called the flowers so blue and golden,
> Stars, that in earth's firmament do shine.'

"But, Romaine, I want to talk to you about a more serious matter than flowers; nothing less than a cricket-match."

"Then I shall leave you to your serious talk," said his sister, "only be sure that you choose a fine day so that we may see the match."

"Look here, old fellow," said Challoner, when Edith had left them, "the officers from Cliffside have challenged this part of the county to make up an eleven and have a match.

Now the soldiers are rather strong, I hear: they've got two very good bowlers. We have a few tolerable players about here, but not much; and we want a leviathan, so you must play."

"My dear fellow, I'm not a leviathan," said Paul, laughing. "I used to play at Eton, but I haven't gone in for it at Oxford, you know."

"What of that? you can play well enough, and you must join us for the honour of the county, and of Oxford."

"Oh, I'll play with pleasure if you wish it; I'm always ready for cricket. But will the men about here like a stranger coming in?"

"Of course they will. What a confoundedly particular old bird you are. But never mind, I'll forgive you. I can manage the rest of the eleven very well now, I think, and we'll have the match one day next week."

"Where's Cliffside?" asked Paul.

"Oh, down by the sea, five or six miles off; we'll go down there soon. There are some caverns and wild places that will please you, I fancy. Now we'll go out and look at the lake, unless you want anything to refresh the inner man. Dinner will be ready in an hour."

Paul having declined all creature comforts for the present, they strolled down to the lake.

"Any fish here?" asked Paul.

"I believe so," said Challoner, "but I don't fish myself, and therefore I'm no authority. You're a disciple of the old fellow who tells us to handle a worm as though we loved him, are you not?"

"Yes, I'm fond of fishing, in spite of old Johnson's remark about the worm at one end of the line and the fool at the

other. But I think I like fishing more for the jolly quiet nooks one finds, and the secluded peaceful time one has, with nobody to jaw and make a row, and nothing but one's own thoughts to occupy one."

"You must have pleasant thoughts, to like them so well," said Frank Challoner, smiling.

"I like them better than fool's talk at any time," said Paul. "I fancy there are few greater luxuries in life than being quiet."

"Except in a town and gown row, eh, Romaine?" answered his friend. "But come, here's a boat on the lake: let's see the great sculler of St. Chrys'tom's in his unrivalled performance."

"None of your chaff, old fellow, or I'll upset the boat, and spoil your chance of a 'First' in Greats."

"Try it," said Frank. "I'm an indifferent good swimmer as times go; you have acknowledged so yourself, old cynic that you are, when we have disported ourselves at Parson's Pleasure."

"This is a better piece of water for swimming than Parson's Pleasure," said Paul, as he pulled the boat across the lake, "though I can't say this blessed boat is as easy to scull as one of Salter's skiffs."

"There goes first dinner bell," cried Frank, while they were still in the middle of the lake; "pull lustily, O mighty rower, or we shall be late."

The boat shot across under the influence of Paul's strong arms, and the young men retired to dress.

At dinner Paul would have far preferred talking to Edith, doubtless with a view to discovering whether his first judgment about her sense was correct; but he had to undergo the

perpetual twitter of Mrs. Challoner. Little foolish affected speeches, often sly ill-natured cuts at her acquaintance, but good common sense never.

Frank tried to turn the conversation several times, but in vain. He was always met with: "Now really, my dear Frank, you know lady Crookback is nothing more than a match-maker; she is always trying to marry her three daughters, and tells everybody about their singing."

"Why, I thought she was your particular friend," said Frank. "You were at her house perpetually in the spring."

"O yes! but I only went because she bothered me, you know; and one must speak of people as we find them."

"Of course," answered Frank, "especially if we find them unpleasant. How well wrote poor Tom Hood when he said,

"'O for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!'"

Presently, however, Mrs. Challoner, who like many other silly people was very inconsistent, was abusing Thackeray's novels. Paul no sooner heard one of his favourite authors thus called in question, and by such a critic, than he said: "Surely, Mrs. Challoner, you don't find fault with Thackeray for speaking the truth. I thought you were saying just now that you liked to speak of people as you found them."

"O yes, Mr. Romaine! but you know Thackeray is so *dreadful*, so cynical and cross, always abusing every one, and making out the world to be so disagreeable."

"A great part of it is, I fancy," said Paul. "It's of no use trying to delude ourselves with the idea that we are in the

garden of Eden. What we want in a book is *truth;* if it is about the world, it ought to speak of the world as *it is*, not as it ought to be, or as the author *thinks* it ought to be."

"But, my dear Mr. Romaine, Thackeray never finds any good; you wouldn't surely say that the world is all bad?"

"God forbid," said Paul. "But I would say, and *do* say, that bad preponderates; and if a book is to show human nature truly, it must describe a great deal of selfishness, and lying, and slander. Besides, you must permit me to differ with you entirely about Thackeray. I think he does paint a great many good characters. Colonel Newcome is as fine a fellow as man ever conceived; Dobbin is a glorious fellow; and Pendennis and Philip Firmin are good specimens of men enough."

"But the women," urged Mrs. Challoner, "they are either simpletons or wicked creatures like that horrid Becky Sharp."

"I won't discuss the question of the lady characters," said Paul, "I might offend you. One may entertain certain views, but one need not air them in company, and give offence."

"Oh, then, you must be a woman-hater, Mr. Paul; only fancy!" cried Mrs. Challoner. "Confess now, are you not?"

"I'm sure Mr. Romaine will not be so ungallant as to plead guilty to such a charge." It was Edith who spoke, and Paul gave her a grateful look, for he by no means saw his way out of the corner into which Mrs. Challoner had driven him.

Mr. Challoner did not join in this conversation; he contented himself with making stately speeches occasionally, and in pressing the wine on his guest with that hearty though somewhat obtrusive hospitality which you still find lingering in old country houses.

Paul could see with half an eye that Mrs. Challoner was

vain, frivolous, and jealous to the last degree of her pretty and amiable stepdaughter. Her one object seemed to be to keep Edith in the background, and to bring her own vain twittering self as much as possible into prominence. She would talk, no matter how foolishly, but talk she would, rather than suffer Edith to engross attention. I don't mean to say the woman was all bad, or even very bad; she behaved with decency in the eyes of society, and went to church regularly; but she was worthless, full of her own importance, aping the young unmarried girl who had caught the fancy of stately Mr. Challoner, and forgetting the graver duties of a wife; always speaking before she thought, and too conceited to draw back after making a blunder.

And it was in the company of such a woman that the gentle high-souled Edith, sensitive to the slightest harshness, smarting under the faintest sting of malice, was condemned to pass her life. As for Frank, though he was being perpetually annoyed by his stepmother's words and manners, yet she rarely attempted open opposition to him. She would have attempted it still more rarely with another kind of man, but Frank Challoner's foible was amiability. But for Edith it was a different thing. Women are so much thrown together, there is so much sitting together over the light tasks which they by a pleasing fiction call "work;" and on such occasions Edith often sighed, and looked longingly into the after-time which, fortunately for us, none can penetrate.

"It's an infernal shame!" quoth Mr. Paul, as he undressed himself that night by the open window of his bedroom.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CRICKET MATCH AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

TIME passed pleasantly enough at Fairwater. After the excitement and hard work of Oxford, Paul was glad to be thoroughly idle for a time; if, at least, passing one's time in the society of a clever and light-hearted girl, or dreaming away long mornings under the arching trees, be really idling away time, which I am much inclined to question. This same dreaming is a luxury which is not permitted to all mortals. Some people can only dream in bed, and then their visions are caused by indigestion; but the day-dream in the glorious summer weather, with the pure azure above, the cool leaves around, and the long shadows flitting to and fro over the greensward, is a blessing which comes to the few.

No one who knew anything about our friend Paul, could possibly call him a dreamer—a sleepy, lazy fellow, who was always on his back, and who hated exertion; yet, muscular and active though he was, the best oar in the St. Chrys'tom's boat, and a good cricketer to boot, he would dream away whole hours under the great elms and beeches in Fairwater Park, and watch the wild fowl scudding about over the lake, or the rabbits frisking round the gnarled roots of the trees.

What were the subjects of his dreams, I wonder? I may

lift the curtain a little, I think, and disclose that Paul was in the habit of reasoning with himself, and taking himself to task most severely in most of these reveries. There was a change in him; he felt it too distinctly to treat it as an illusion: he thought more about Edith Challoner, and less about his home or other things, than he could have supposed it possible. He found himself absolutely at the beck and call of the young girl whom he had seen for the first time under the trees in Magdalen walk; and had Edith chosen to be tyrannical, which she by no means was, she would have found Paul a veritable serf in her service. Paul felt all this, and asked himself the question, What does it mean? I can't be in love, the thing is too absurd: I've never cared for this kind of thing; in fact, I have always held aloof from it, as a waste of time, and an unnecessary sort of thing. Besides, what a fool I should look if I were to become spoony, after all the tirades I have fulminated against women and their ways. No, Paul settled that he was decidedly not in love!

He tried to read instead of dreaming, when not with Edith, but this proved a dead failure. At last Frank Challoner, who had been away for a day or two, returned and announced that he had completed all the arrangements for the cricket match, and that it was to take place in two days' time. This was a diversion in the right direction, and Paul gave up dreaming, and even walks with Edith, in favour of a vigorous practice at bowling; Challoner taking his place at the wicket, and receiving a series of painfully swift and savage balls from Paul's strong arm.

The morning of the match was all that could be desired, and some suspicious looking clouds which had appeared threatening on the previous night had rolled away by day-

break. The wickets were pitched in a capital piece of ground, some little distance from the house, and here a gay marquee was erected, and preparations for lunch were set on foot under the superintendence of the butler. The military cricketers arrived in a drag from Cliffside in excellent time, and were greeted by the Challoners and the rival eleven in the marquee. Paul Romaine had walked down from the house with Edith Challoner, and had had one of the pleasantest talks he ever remembered to have had anywhere; so much so that for the first time in his life he regretted that he was going to play cricket.

After the officers had paid their respects to the ladies, one of them, a rather handsome man, with languid brown eyes and long soft moustache, lingered persistently by Edith's side, and began talking to her in a way which left her no choice but to listen, and Paul no chance of cutting in and spoiling the *tête-à-tête*. Paul thought, too, that Edith's eye sparkled a little and that a brighter colour came into her cheek as she listened to the officer's talk. She certainly *did* listen, and talk too, and was evidently much pleased with her companion.

"Who is that man talking to Miss Challoner?" asked Paul of some one.

"Oh, that's Captain Singleton; he's the nephew of Lord Thornwood, you know: a very nice fellow, very distinguished too in the Indian Mutiny, I believe."

During the time of preparation, whilst the stumps were being pitched and the umpires chosen, Captain Singleton continued to talk to Edith. Why was it, I wonder, that Paul suddenly arrived at the conclusion that this Captain Augustus Singleton, of the —th regiment of Light Infantry,

was his personal foe, and as such to be marked out for speedy vengeance? Certain it is, that Paul did arrive at such a conclusion, though the logic which led him to it would hardly have done him credit at Oxford; and with a singular inconsistency he muttered, as he stalked forth to the bowling-place, "Well, it's no business of mine, at any rate."

The game began, and Mrs. Challoner and Edith, with two or three ladies who had come over to see the match, with several children who enjoyed the fun amazingly, were seated under the shadow of the tent.

Paul bowled very badly at first. Perhaps the sun was too hot, or perhaps the ground was slippery, or perhaps (but this is very unlikely) he might have been thinking of Edith Challoner and Captain Singleton. At all events, he bowled badly, and the soldiers had got thirty runs with only three wickets down.

"Look out, Romaine! this will never do, you know!" said Challoner, as little Ensign Pipps hit another of Paul's balls for three, and ran up the score to an alarming extent. At the next "over" Pipps was caught out, and Singleton took his place at the wicket. He was considered a crack player by the officers, and more than one had said: "By Jove, we shall see some play now, you know."

When Paul found himself opposite to the champion player of Cliffside, a singular change was observable in his bowling: he relinquished his careless style, and sent his first ball whizzing like a cannon shot at his opponent's wicket; and though of course it was by pure accident that the ball hit the Captain full on the leg a little above his pad, yet Paul's face wore a pleased expression, nevertheless, as he heard Singleton's no very gentle expression of pain. The Captain, however, played well

and carefully, nor did Paul's swift balls again take him at a disadvantage. Two wickets fell before them, but Singleton still remained master of his position. Once, when he had cut one of Paul's balls right away to leg and had run three for it, the cries of "Well played, Singleton!" which resounded from the soldiers, were re-echoed by the ladies; and Paul heard, or thought he heard, Edith's voice raised in praise of the Captain's success.

"By Jove," muttered Paul between his clenched teeth, "he *shall* come out this time." And as he so muttered, he delivered a ball at once so swift and true, that it flew like lightning past Singleton's bat, and sent the stumps in three different directions, amid shouts of "Well bowled, Romaine, well bowled!" When the last of the officers came out, the score stood at 125, of which Singleton had made the greatest number.

"We shall get an awful licking, Challoner, I'm afraid," said young Burnand, a cousin of Challoner's, who had come over for the match.

"Licking! Not a bit of it," said Paul, coming up at the moment. "They haven't got any bowlers; I believe all their strength's in batting."

He turned away and walked over to Edith.

"How well you have been bowling," she said, looking for a moment into his dark, deeply marked face, now glowing with heat and exertion. "You bowled out Captain Singleton beautifully."

"I'm glad you think so, Miss Challoner," said Paul somewhat gruffly. "I feared my success there might not have pleased you so well."

"What do you mean?" she asked quickly. "Do you *suppose that any of* your successes would be unpleasant to me?"

"I hardly know; it depends very much on circumstances, I expect. It's such a new thing for people to be interested in me or my doings, that perhaps I don't quite realize it; but excuse me, I must go in."

So saying, he shouldered his bat and went to the wicket.

Edith's soft eyes followed him, and though the handsome face of Captain Singleton was easily distinguishable from where she sat, Edith did not look at him, but at Paul, who, we know, was not handsome, and who had just been almost rude to her.

Edith's interest in Paul was rewarded; for that gentleman played so well that he soon won "golden opinions from all sorts of men," and the military heroes of Cliffside declared that "the big Oxford man was an uncommonly neat bat and no mistake."

In vain Captain Ratter of the Dragoons gave his celebrated slow balls; in vain Lieutenant Saberley delivered his most aggravating "twisters;" Paul played the dangerous balls, and sent the others spinning across the ground, amid shouts of "Run it out!" "Go another, there's loads of time!"

When at length, hot and exhausted, Paul was run out, and retired with forty runs, his fame was up several degrees, but strange to say his temper was no better than before. In fact, our friend Paul, whose faults I have never tried to gloss over, was in a thoroughly savage mood, ready to fancy any nonsense that came uppermost, to think himself aggrieved and neglected, Edith cold, and Singleton an ass; all which things show very clearly that that remark of his, "Well, it's no business of mine," was perhaps the most foolish thing of the many which he had said that day.

Presently an incident happened which, by calling Paul into

action, did him some good. One of the children who were looking at the match was a curly-haired boy of ten, son of one of Mr. Challoner's tenants. Little Archer, with that determination to get hurt if possible which characterizes all children, had strayed within the flags marking the bounds of the ground; and presently a ball, struck by Burnand, came flying through the air, and hitting the boy full on the head, stretched him senseless on the ground.

There was an immediate rush to the spot; but the first to raise up the child and carry him in his strong arms to the tent, was Paul. The boy's face was white, his eyes were closed, and for some time it appeared doubtful whether the eyes would ever open again. Edith Challoner leaned over him and bathed his face with that soft-handed delicacy which man can never attain to, be he never so gentle and kindly; and as Paul supported the boy's head on his knees, Edith's golden locks mingled, for a moment, with Paul's black and tumbled hair. It may have been some sudden spasm which made our friend start as he felt one of the shining curls touching his forehead: at all events he did start.

By the time a servant had ridden off for a doctor, little Archer's eyes opened, and after staring about him wildly for a little, he managed to get up, and declared himself "all right," except a slight headache. So Paul had to leave his pleasant quarters by Edith, and look at the wickets, and when the last of the Fairwater eleven came out, the scorer proclaimed 145 runs; and so the Cliffside officers were beaten, as Challoner remarked, "all to sticks." Then followed a jovial cricketing supper; and when Paul went to bed, worn out with his hard day's work, he was not too tired to dream, and he *did* dream, but of what? Ay, that's a secret!

CHAPTER XIV.

A STRAIN OF MUSIC.

Some days had passed since the cricket match, days which had been spent in riding and boating, and rambling about the country. There was one part of the day's entertainment, however, which Paul liked better than any other; and this was neither a gallop on Frank's chestnut mare, nor a pull on the lake, nor even a day-dream under the Boundary Oak; it was the time which he spent with Edith, either in the park or in a pleasant rustic arbour in her flower-garden. Here they talked and read Shakespeare together, sometimes accompanied by Frank Challoner, and sometimes (and these times were the best) alone. Paul's deep and by no means unmusical voice was often to be heard issuing from this retreat, as he read aloud some poet for Edith's edification; and, strange to say, Edith, who had always been a lover of poetry, found that she had never enjoyed her favourite authors so much before. They were very unfashionable, I fear, in their tastes; for Browning seldom found a place in their readings. Perhaps they thought that to understand what they read was preferable to being fashionable, and found less mysticism and more true poetry in such writers as Moore and Byron, Keats and Hood, than in a modern and more

generally appreciated author. Reading poetry together is a very certain way to understand each other's sentiments and sympathies, and I expect that Paul and Edith got to know each other better than ever during these days.

. And yet Paul continued to argue with himself, and to laugh at the idea that he could possibly be in love. One evening our friend was sitting in the drawing-room, and Edith was at the piano. Frank had just left them, and Mrs. Challoner had one of her headaches, which, by a special dispensation of Providence, frequently confined her to her room. It was a warm drowsy summer evening. The warm tints of day were slowly melting into the grey shadowy dimness of twilight, and the scent of the flowers came faint and sweet through the open window. Paul reclined in the easiest of all easy chairs, near this window, and gazed out into the park and its growing shadows, whilst Edith Challoner played to him. She was one of those enthusiastic lovers of music who forget whilst they are playing all else besides the deeper meaning of the harmony, and are as much transported beyond the scene in which they really are, as though the fairies and genii of the old "Arabian Nights" had borne them off by their potent spells. The air which Edith played was not a grand "piece," difficult of execution, and causing every key to vibrate from end to end of the piano; but it was a soft, melting, thrilling air, so full of sweet chords and delicate echoing sounds that the most common-place hearer would have probably got beyond the conventional "very pretty," which usually follows the efforts of a pianist.

On Paul, however, who was (perhaps without knowing it) as passionately fond of music as Edith herself, the effect of that music was singularly powerful. I don't know whether

I can convey to my readers what I mean—I doubt if I can thoroughly: perhaps those who are lovers of music will guess something of my meaning. Have you ever known what it is to listen to music which hurries your thoughts away immediately from the place you are in, plunging you into a calm delicious melancholy—not painful melancholy, a feeling of sadness which

> "Is not akin to pain,
> But resembles sorrow only
> As the mist resembles rain"?

Have you ever felt your every-day cares and troubles and doubts and anxieties banished for the time, and only the past and the future before you? It is a time when the old pleasant days which are gone come back again, shadowed over by a cloud of chastened melancholy; when every scene of the past times stands out in bold relief, like figures in some highly tinted picture, and when the future is full of pleasant impossibilities. It is one kind of waking dream, and it is the pleasantest that I know. If you have ever felt all this, or any part of it, you can understand very well what Paul Romaine felt as the twilight shadows grew more deep around him, and the last thrill of the music ended. I don't know what prompted Paul to open his heart to Edith that evening, and try to tell all that he felt. All I know is that he did so, and he described it far more fully and far better than I have been able to do. And he said more, too, to Edith: he told her of his difficulties and struggles, of the bitter change in his prospects which poverty had brought, and how he was often slighted and looked down upon, and how keenly he felt it. He knew that she sympathized with him: he had known it a long time; and now his heart was opened by that strain of

music, his usual taciturnity and reserve were gone, and he spoke earnestly and unreservedly.

I suppose that fits of morbid feeling are inherent to things of this sort; I have known many such cases, and people are always ready to fancy themselves uncared-for and neglected, and very unhappy: people, too, who have not half the real cause for such thoughts that Paul had. Paul was certainly rather morbid on this occasion.

"I sometimes think," he said, as he pressed his head to the window and looked out upon the darkening landscape, "I sometimes think that it's of no use my working and fretting myself as I do, for what good will it bring? With the exception of my mother and Maude, who in the world will care what I do? Ambition is all very well in its way, but it's a hollow deceitful guide after all, and leaves us as soon as the goal is reached. I could almost wish— But you think me a fool, I've no doubt, Miss Challoner?"

"No, I don't think that; but I think, and in fact I am *sure*, you ought not to talk in that way," said Edith, very gravely.

"I know all that you would say," answered Paul. "You'll go on to tell me about my duty, and that that is sufficient. I know it all, but it doesn't alter my feeling a bit. I shall go on working because I know it is my duty; but it won't fill up the void, it won't give me loving hearts who will be interested in and eager for my success."

He spoke very sadly, and Edith, who was standing partially concealed by the curtain, said, in a voice so soft and low that he almost fancied it was the echo of the music he had heard so lately, "Do not say so. I shall be ever most interested, most eager for your success."

There was not much in the words, only a common-place compliment, perhaps; but the tone meant more. Paul hardly knew why he took Edith's hand in his, and said: "Can you really feel this for me, who am so rough and ill-natured to you and every one else at times; whom they call a woman-hater and a cynic? Can you who have converted me feel more than the rest do for me, who am all this, and poor besides?"

She did not answer him; and yet—I am wrong!—she did answer him, but it was not in words. Her soft sweet eyes looked up into his eager face for a moment: that face was not stern now, but flushed with hope and pride and pleasure. The hand which Paul had not taken rested lightly on his sturdy shoulder, and Edith's golden curls were nestled on his broad breast.

And Paul had not been in love! How blind man can be, ay, even the most keen-sighted, at times! And this was Paul Romaine, the woman-hater, the stern self-reliant young man, who cared for nothing but ambition, and laughed at love as an unnecessary weakness!

Look at them now as they stand in the shadow of the window, with the misty gloaming round them; and then bid Diogenes skulk to his tub in rage and fury, for verily he has lost a disciple.

CHAPTER XV.

ST. WINIFRED'S ISLAND.

It is not my intention to inflict on my readers an analysis of Paul's feelings, now that the words had been said, and the answer had been given. No, I may have too many prosy chapters to answer for in this history to allow me to dwell now on the feelings of the young lovers. To the persons concerned it is all very well, nothing can be better; but to the world outside of the rosy atmosphere, and when written down on paper, it is at the best but poor sickly stuff.

Paul felt, however, that he had entered on a new lease of life. He had been a dweller on the threshold as yet: now he was entering a new phase of existence. Those thoughts which he had loved to cherish with a sort of gloomy martyr-like feeling (for we all like to *think* ourselves martyrs, however averse we may be to the pains belonging to such a character)—thoughts of a lonely life, lighted only by the *ignis fatuus* which men call ambition, and without any of the softer and sweeter ties of earth—these thoughts had all been banished, and had "melted into thin air," at the word of that pretty enchantress Edith. Oh, commend me to such conjurers! they are a thousand times better than all the wizards, from Cornelius Agrippa to Professor Anderson,

and may practise their witching arts without fear of the busybodies who go about to show up the tricks of less fortunate magicians.

Abiding by my determination, I shall not intrude myself on the many walks and talks which Edith and Paul took together about this time. Not that all their talks were of the milk-and-honey class which we hear of, and alas! read of in the penny novels: there were graver thoughts and doubts which obtruded themselves even in this newly-made Eden; thoughts touching "ways and means," which were not forgotten, though our young friends *were* very young; and doubts as to what Mr. Challoner, the cold and proud, would say on the subject, and what ill-natured things Mrs. Challoner, the weak and malicious, would do or try to do. They agreed to tell Frank, at all events. So one day when Paul and his friend were out riding, the former said, rather abruptly: "Frank, I'm going to tell you a secret; do you know what it is?"

"That you're heartily sick of Fairwater, and want to be off, perhaps," answered Challoner.

"Nonsense. It is something which will make it very hard for me to leave Fairwater, as I fear I soon must. Frank, old fellow, I'm in love with your sister."

"Are you?" said Frank, without changing a muscle.

"And, what's more to the purpose," continued Paul, awkwardly enough, "she knows, and—"

"Is very angry, of course," suggested Frank. "Come, old fellow, don't look like a muff; anybody would imagine you were confessing a deadly crime. I knew your secret three weeks ago."

"No! did you really?" asked Paul.

"Of course I did. Do you think I'm blind, and deaf, and stupid? Ha ha! *mon ami*, I'll trouble you for a little of your misogyny now. Don't you think you've been a precious humbug, telling me all those fine Byronic, Giaour-like stories about your hatred for the fair, and then falling down like a good-tempered Samson, and getting your head shaved, metaphorically speaking, at one stroke."

"Chaff away, old fellow!" said Paul, who as he sat on horseback looked uncommonly foolish under this brisk attack. "Hit me while I'm down, and welcome. I confess! you may as well absolve me at once, instead of wasting your precious breath in those withering displays of sarcasm."

"You ought not to get off so easily, I can tell you," answered his friend. "You deserve a good slanging; and since you've been enjoying yourself lately, I've a good mind to let out freely now; but on the whole, I'll let you off. So let's talk sensibly."

"With all my heart, if you can contrive to manage it," said Paul.

"We are caustic, but it don't matter," Frank said, laughing. "Now then, who knows of this business?"

"No one but you and the people concerned."

"Well, then, they mustn't: at all events not yet. You've seen something of my father; I've naturally seen more of him, and I know that he'd cut up rough and interfere disagreeably if he knew it; he's uncommonly stiff and proud, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"If your father supposes," said Paul haughtily, "that he or his family will suffer any degradation in point of gentility, I would have him know—"

"Now, my dear fellow," interposed Challoner, "don't talk rot: nobody ever supposed anything of the kind; but, you

know, in these days other things besides birth are put into the scales,—yes, and pretty heavily too; and that a snob with ten thousand a year is oftener sought after than a peer with a barren inheritance. I don't refer to my own people: if I thought such a thing possible I should despise the name I bear; but I think you know what I mean."

"I know too well," said Paul sighing. "You mean that your father will never consent to Edith's marying a poor man who, though a gentleman, must work his way in the world, and who at present doesn't quite see the road he means to begin upon."

"I mean nothing of the sort, Romaine," answered Frank Challoner. "What I mean is, that we must keep your love affairs quiet for a time, and see what turns up: like Mr. Micawber, we must wait for that contingency; and meantime give me your hand, old fellow, and let me congratulate you on loving as dear and pure-hearted a girl as is in all England."

The two friends grasped each other's hands, and then turned their horses' heads homeward. On arriving at the house they found that some friends at Cliffside had sent an invitation for the whole party to a picnic on the sands next day, which invitation had been accepted. Paul had not yet, in spite of his long stay, been to Cliffside; and this, with the thought of a day in Edith's company, perhaps some time alone with her, made him look forward to their picnic with much pleasure.

They started on the following morning, some in carriages, Paul and Challoner on horseback. The day was not so brilliant as the last had been, and some angry-looking clouds hung over the horizon; but as few people in England are sufficiently sanguine to expect a picnic unvisited by rain, our friends hoped for the best and made up their minds for the worst. A

pleasant ride brought them to the cliffs overhanging the sea. The view was magnificent, as all sea views must be, especially when the ocean is seen from a great height. Here the cliffs rose for fifty or sixty feet and below them stretched the bright green waters flecked with white crisp foam-wreaths, as the tiny waves were driven shorewards by the breeze.

The rocky coast, above which the party had halted, formed at this point a little bay; two huge and irregular masses of rock running out for a considerable distance into the sea, and enclosing a sheet of comparatively smooth water. Farther out at sea the sunlight slanted through a haze, brightening the caps of the waves till they flashed like burnished arms, and occasionally glanced on the white sail of some far-off vessel, which passed away into the cloud-land of the horizon and was seen no more.

Turning from this view, Paul and his friends descended by a winding and rather precipitous road to the village, or rather town, of Cliffside, which lay beyond the bay, and somewhat removed from the shore. Leaving the carriage in the town, our friends again descended by a still more precipitous path, so steep that Edith was obliged to cling tightly to Paul's arm, till they reached the Mermaids' Sands, as the spot was called; and here, partly on the long grass which grew in the neighbouring sand-hills, and partly on the hard yellow sands themselves, they formed a large and jovial party, and partook of a goodly lunch. The sea rippled placidly on the sand some hundred yards off, the tide was low, and they had taken up a position at the very edge of the sands; so even the most nervous of the very nervous old ladies was at her ease. This Mermaids' Sand was the only portion of the coast for miles which was not shut in by rocks and overhanging cliffs, and even here the *huge jagged masses* of rock were in sight.

Picnics are capital things in their way, when there is plenty to eat, plenty to drink—and, mark you, that plenty not from the vintage of South Africa—no disagreeable people, and no rain: under these circumstances, picnics are very agreeable things. But for all that, the conversation on such occasions does not look particularly well in print; so I shall not record what Brown said when he mixed the lobster salad, or what jokes Smith attempted to make about the champagne. They all took amazingly with some people, and the rest were not obliged to listen; so the whole thing was a success. But the best part of the day's pleasure was to come; at least so Paul thought, and I dare say some others too, when the party rose from their primitive lunch-table and broke into different groups to "wander at their own sweet wills." The elder part of the party preferred cigars and small talk on the sand-hills; the younger betook themselves to the rocks and beach to search for shells and sea-anemones.

Now Edith Challoner had cherished certain thoughts of having a marine aquarium; and when so good an opportunity offered, it would be a mistake to neglect a search for some inmates for the said tank. So Paul and Edith, and Frank, and the Summerley girls, as the young men irreverently called the two dark-eyed laughing daughters of old Major Summerley, betook themselves to the rocky barrier which closed one side of the Mermaids' Sands. Having passed this, they found themselves in a wild and lonely part of the shore, where the sand and shingle were strewn with great masses of rock, round the bases of which many a clear pool was bright with ocean-flowers. Overhead towered the mighty cliffs, in whose crevices high in air they could see the green tufts of the wild-cabbage and the samphire, whilst occasionally a gull darted

from his nest with a harsh cry, and swept out on his long wings seaward.

Looking for shells and anemones is engrossing work, as all who have tried it know; so that by the time Edith had half-filled her basket with razor-shells, and donax, and red sea-weed, to form a bed for the delicate *dianthus* and *bellis*, which Paul removed from the rock-pools with marvellous dexterity (for it is no easy matter), they were both astonished to find that their companions, whom they had lately seen crouching and hunting among the rocks, were now nowhere to be seen. Paul's shout brought no answer, and indeed the roar of the surf upon the rocks, for they were now beyond the quiet bay, drowned all other sounds.

"We shall come upon them presently: they can't be far off," said Paul; and I fancy he was not very sorry for the absence of the Summerley girls, or that of his friend either.

Presently they came to an opening between two high rocks, which showed them, some fifty yards nearer the sea, a large irregular-shaped mass of rock and shingle which looked like an island, except that the sea only approached on one side.

"There ought to be good anemones out there," said Paul. "Shall we try it?"

"That's St. Winifred's Island," answered Edith. "We had a picnic there once; I wish they had chosen it to-day. O yes! let us go there; it's a delightful place: quite a sea-king's castle."

They reached the island after some little climbing over slippery rocks, and found it well worth the trouble. Its rocky sides were hollowed out into tiny caverns, within which some of the more rare and beautiful anemones were blooming, and a little strip of bright sand, underneath a great shoulder of

rock fringed with green weed, offered them an agreeable resting-place after their exertion. And under this rock they sat, looking out upon the tumbling surf, and talking of the future, as the young will ever do, and of themselves and their love, and of the wonder which lay beating and moaning at their feet, and of that mysterious awe which ever affects us as we look long at the ocean—that awe which the dying child felt, when he longed to learn the language of the waves—of all this, and much more, talked Paul and Edith.

As they sat thus, sometimes framing fanciful legends of the saint whose name had been given to the rocky island, sometimes speaking of closer and more tender matters, they were both totally unconscious of the flight of time, or of a marked change in the aspect of the day. Unnoticed by them, heavy storm-clouds had gathered overhead, and the wind which, when they had arrived, had been blowing fresh, had now considerably increased in violence. But worse than all this, whilst they had been sitting in the sheltered angle of the rock, which partly shut out the view of the sea, the tide had risen, and when Paul at length arose, a glance sufficed to show him that they were surrounded by the waters, and that St. Winifred's Island now fully deserved its name. Anxious not to alarm Edith, who was searching for some object in the rocks, he said quietly, "Is this place ever surrounded by the sea?"

"I have never seen it so: it can only be when the tides are unusually high, I fancy," she answered.

"Do not be frightened, dearest Edith," said Paul, "but the tide has surprised us, and is rather too deep for wading, so we must look out for a fisherman's boat."

He spoke quite quietly, not wishing to alarm her; but Edith sprang up, and the colour left her cheek, as one hurried

glance showed her the long white breakers rolling between them and the shore, and above, the dark and threatening sky.

"O Paul, we are lost!" she exclaimed. "How mad of us to venture here! Now, too, I remember some talk of its being spring-tide, as we rode here to-day."

"By Jove! and so it must be—the sea is running in like mad," said Paul. "But never fear, dearest one, we'll not be drowned yet: only keep up, and don't get frightened. See, yonder! isn't that a man on the shore?"

Eagerly they looked towards the spot, but a rock had deceived them by its fancied resemblance to a human form.

Though naturally courageous, and far superior to the little fears of many girls, yet poor Edith's face blanched as she saw the rocky islet which they occupied becoming every moment more contracted, as the treacherous waves came on swiftly and remorselessly. With that instinctive confidence, however, in one we love, she looked up into Paul's dark face and said, as she clasped his arm in her small white hands: "Paul, can you save me?"

"Yes, dearest, with God's help," he answered hopefully: far more hopefully than he felt; for he saw that the shore was deserted, and that no boat was in sight upon the sea, and he knew that they could not maintain their present position for more than half an hour.

"Edith," he said, clasping her slight waist with his sturdy arm, "this is a danger which I never dreamed of, which I ought nevertheless to have foreseen. We are in peril, my own; I will not try to conceal what you see for yourself; but there is hope, great hope, if only you preserve your courage for a little. It would be hard indeed to die thus, just as you have made my life so bright. With God's help, and confident in your love,

I can and will save you. But we must stay here till the last moment; some of our friends must return to look for us soon, and will get assistance."

"And if not—if this place is covered?" asked Edith faintly.

"Then, dearest, our way lies there," said Paul, pointing to the stormy waters, which rushed wildly towards the shore. "I will try to swim ashore with you."

Terrible moments were those which followed. Swiftly and eagerly the dark waves came crowding up round the now tiny islet of St. Winifred, hissing and seething round the rocks where they had so lately gathered shells, roaring defiantly at the two beings who stood there at their mercy, splashing them with foam, and rudely tearing away the seaweed treasures which Edith's hands had so lately gathered. On towards the shore rolled the cold, tumbling waves, hissing and moaning as they went, and breaking into clouds of spray as they reached the rocky beach. And all this while Paul's keen eye could see no hope of succour, no human being on shore, no vessel seawards. The tide had risen to within two yards of their feet, and the noise of the waves was almost deafening. Paul gazed on Edith's beautiful pale face, and his own manly countenance wore a look of unspeakable agony as he pictured that form tossed lifeless at the will of that cruel sea. Presently Edith turned from him, and dropping on the wet rock clasped her hands together. Paul thought that she had fainted; but he saw that her lips moved, and that her sad eyes were turned upwards, and that she was praying to the God whose voice of old stilled the raging of the waters. The tide was already wetting the skirts of her dress, when Paul turned with a look of stern determination in his eyes, and quickly throwing aside his boots, coat, and waistcoat, unfastened the handkerchief

from his neck, and joined it to one which Edith held in her hand.

"Edith," he said, "we must trust ourselves to the sea: it is our only chance, the distance is not great, and I am a good swimmer. I must bind your arm to my neck; see! it is soon done. Now, dearest, are you ready? the water's over our feet."

She looked once towards the shore: it seemed so far away now, over that terrible waste of waters: and then her eyes returned to the pale but determined face of Paul, and only murmuring softly, "If we die, dearest, I am yours," she signed to him to descend into the waves which hissed and boiled around them.

Gently and firmly supporting Edith with his left arm, Paul advanced warily down the rocks, cheering her as the first rush of the cold waters made her start and shudder; and when at length clear of the jutting points of rock, he raised his burden as high as his strength permitted, and struck out boldly with his right arm into the sea.

It was well for both that Paul had been at Eton, where swimming is a necessary part of education, and it was well also that our friend had become there a first-rate proficient in the art. To swim alone, and with both arms, in such a sea, with a strong side current sweeping along, would have been no easy task; but to bear the burden of Edith, after being cramped and numbed by the cold for a long time previously, rendered the effort almost hopeless. Still, though the waves buffeted him rudely, and filled his mouth and eyes with brine, and roughly scattered Edith's fair locks abroad, still Paul held bravely on his way. His life, and that of her he loved best on earth, depended on his efforts. Was it not a stake worth

ing for?

The side current was the worst enemy against which Paul had to contend, for in spite of his efforts to gain a certain point of land which seemed nearer than the rest, the current swept him along sideways. The water was intensely cold, the high wind cut his face like a knife, but still he held on bravely. Blinded with foam, breathless from exhaustion, he could not see the face of Edith; but his aching arm still bore her up, his other arm still clove the opposing water.

It must end soon. He felt a deadly numbness and utter exhaustion coming over him; his strokes grew more feeble, a sense of lassitude and carelessness stole over him, and he knew that this must mean *death*.

Was it a shout above the roaring of the tide, or only the shriek of some sea-bird in its flight? Again it sounded loud and clear, a hail sent cheerily over the tumbling noisy breakers, among the foam of which Paul and his burden now were. "Ahoy! Look out for a line!"

Paul heard the shout, and, exhausted though he was, it gave him new life; he raised himself in the water and saw through the blinding spray a dark object borne towards him.

He tried to grasp it, but failed. Again it came near, a rope with a running noose in it; another grasp, and it was seized and slipped round both their bodies.

"Cheerily now, my lads!" shouts the voice from the shore, and three stout fisher lads haul in the line, and with it Paul and Edith; the latter pale, cold, and motionless; the former too weak to rise from the wet beach where they have laid him.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH A NEW CHARACTER TURNS UP.

THE firm of Cheyne and Ballantyne was situated in that vague locality which I have before spoken of, known as "somewhere in the city." To the great mercantile world, however, the situation of the firm was by no means vague, for it was a large and important place of business, and was said to be as flourishing a house as any within the liberties of the city. Formerly the firm had been that of Cheyne Brothers and Ballantyne, but on the death of Mr. Henry Cheyne, the father of our friend Percy, the names stood as at present. Henry Cheyne's decease by no means injured the business, in fact it greatly improved it; for that gentleman had been both careless and unfortunate in his affairs, and not only wasted his own private fortune, but had lost a good deal of the money of the firm into the bargain. In consequence of this a quarrel and long misunderstanding arose between the two brothers, Henry and Ralph, which was hardly adjusted at the time of the former's death. However, Ralph Cheyne was left sole guardian of his nephew Percy, and as his father had nothing to leave, Percy depended entirely on his uncle for any fortune which he might choose to give him.

The uncle and nephew had never been very good friends;

it was scarcely possible that they could be. Percy was high-spirited, impetuous, and wilful, though thoroughly kind-hearted and honest. Ralph Cheyne, on the other hand, was a cold calculating man of business, with no imagination, and a profound contempt for every one who had. He possessed a great capacity for acquiring and hoarding pounds, shillings, and pence; but had no capacity to speak of for acquiring and preserving that perishable fluid, "the milk of human kindness." It was not very likely then that the uncle and nephew should agree well together, more especially as Ralph seemed inclined to visit the sins of the father upon the son. There had been several quarrels between the uncle and nephew, and each succeeding one more bitter and lasting than its predecessor.

One bright day in August, Percy Cheyne came out of his uncle's counting-house, and turned into Cannon Street, with a look of ill-concealed vexation. The fact was that he had visited the counting-house for certain pecuniary reasons, and as usual, the views of the uncle and nephew had failed to coincide. Percy walked down Cannon Street switching the air with his cane, and evidently much out of humour, when a man suddenly started from a corner where he had been lounging, and touched Percy's arm.

"What, Tony Kestrel, is this you?" exclaimed Percy, looking earnestly at the man who had touched him. He was a young fellow, apparently about Percy's own age, good-looking, but with a dissipated swagger in his manner, and though his clothes were worn and shabby, they were adjusted evidently with a view to effect. His low-crowned hat, with a very curling brim, was cocked rakishly over one eye, and his old frock coat was buttoned close at the throat and left open at

the waist. Such was the man who now answered Percy's salutation.

"Ah, ah! old boy, so you don't forget me! I'm glad of it. Yes, I'm all that is left of Anthony Kestrel, Esquire, formerly of Doctor Marplay's Collegiate Institution for young gentlemen."

"But what on earth have you been doing ever since?" asked Percy.

"That's a question which scarcely admits of an answer in the centre of Cannon Street, and during the time which we should be allowed to spend here by the police authorities. But if you'll favour me with your arm, I'll endeavour to satisfy your very natural curiosity."

Percy gave a glance at his companion's seedy coat, then without hesitation took his arm, not without a mental prayer that he might not meet any of his friends while in such company.

"You look flourishing enough at all events, old fellow!" said Mr. Kestrel, glancing at Percy from head to foot. "May I ask what walk of life you at present adorn?"

"I'm at Oxford," answered Percy; "I believe I'm going to the bar."

"'O the pity of it!'" exclaimed his friend; "thou wilt starve, my gentle Percy; thy existence will be a brief yet briefless livelihood."

"Very possibly; but let me hear about *your* doings," said Percy.

"Certainly," began Mr. Kestrel, in the same hectoring tone which he had used all along. "'I will a tale unfold'—you know my antecedents, sir; you knew me at Doctor Marplay's. We were friends, brothers; together we walked and played

and fought, together we ate the furtive tart and smoked the surreptitious weed. You remember, too, how vainly the Doctor tried with misplaced zeal to fit me for the mean pursuits of commerce."

"Yes, I remember your fallings off in arithmetic, my poor Tony."

"'Pity me not, but lend an attentive ear.' You remember how often I was weighed in the balance and found wanting, till at last one morning I was not found at all."

"In other words, you bolted from school," said Percy.

"Exactly: *rem acu*'—what is it? I've forgotten the little Latin I ever knew. Well, when that 'consummation devoutly to be wished' had been consummated, I started forth, and having no relatives in particular, and certainly none who troubled to look after me, I found the world was mine oyster, which I found considerable difficulty in opening, especially as swords are not worn in these days. So, after various hard lines, after writing sensation stories for a penny paper, which died a natural death in three months, and after attending to a bookseller's business for about one month, during which time I read all the books and neglected all the customers, I became, mark me, an actor."

"Is it possible?" said Percy, laughing at his friend's quaint relation; "then your talent for bed-room dramas at school has come to something."

"It has indeed. You mayn't think it, but you behold before you the Roscius of the day. I who played Mazeppa among the bolsters at Grimway House, I who sustained Iago to thy Othello, now walk the stage in reality."

"And how have you succeeded?"

"Oh! passing well," replied Mr. Kestrel. "There have been

certain drawbacks, certain lackings of filthy lucre; but then, 'he who steals my purse steals trash.' I am once more Fortune's favourite, and may aptly say, 'Now is the very winter of my discontent made glorious summer by this sun of York,' for I have an excellent engagement in that interesting city, and go thither to-morrow."

"I am most glad that you are well off, and not out at elbows, as I almost feared you might be," said Percy.

"I have been more than once, and at this present speaking am somewhat poorly clad withal. But I am as happy as the day is long; and, by the soul of Shakespeare, Percy, my face was far the more jovial of the two when we met just now."

"I've been annoyed, infernally annoyed," said Percy; "my uncle—"

"'O my prophetic soul, my uncle!'" ejaculated the actor, "is he still to the fore? I recollect your stories of dear Nunkie in the old days. 'I knew him well, Horatio,' I mean Percy."

"He is a thousand times worse than ever he was," said Percy, "unjust, overbearing, insolent beyond endurance. I feel tempted to throw over all my chances of getting his money, sometimes, and going out to seek my fortune as you did, Tony."

"I wish with all my heart you would, old boy; we should be a merry pair. You were made for an actor, and always were as good, or very nearly as good, as I myself in Othello. Throw over old Money-bags—it's more than likely that he'll throw *you* over—and come with me 'to the well-trod stage, anon;' you'll make your fortune, we'll make it together."

"Thanks, Tony, but my views are otherwise directed. I must stay on at Oxford, and see as little of my uncle as possible."

"You'll accept my offer yet, or I'm much mistaken," said Tony Kestrel. "You are much changed from the Percy of old times, if you bear the lashings of an uncle's tongue for ever. And remember, if things do alter with you, write to me at the Post-office, York; I shall get the letter all right, and I may help you, though now you think me one of Falstaff's ragged regiment, doubtless. Remember to direct your letter to Alston Mortimer; by such name do men know me. And now, good-bye, old friend, I have an appointment."

"Can I assist you in any way? you know I am ready," said Percy.

"No, thank you: at present I need no help. I may soon assist *you* though, and in that hope, farewell. I go where glory waits me."

"What a strange, good-for-nothing, kind-hearted creature it is!" thought Percy, as he directed his course towards his uncle's residence. During the rest of his walk he thought over the school days when he and Tony Kestrel were indeed the close friends which Tony had said; he remembered the hundred punishments and scrapes in which he and his careless friend had been engaged; and above all the *éclat* with which Kestrel and some others used to get up a play in the bedrooms at night—a concealed candle, carefully hoarded, serving for foot-lights and chandelier, and a row of pillows and bedsteads pulled close together forming the scenery of some rocky valley, or interior of a robber's cave. "His ideas of introducing me to the stage are rather too absurd, though," thought Percy; "it's not very likely that I shall come to that, whatever happens. I'll note the name and address, nevertheless." Percy accordingly wrote the assumed name of Mr. Kestrel in his pocketbook, and entered his uncle's house, which stood in the west end of town, near Hyde Park.

Mr. Ralph Cheyne was in a more than ordinarily surly humour when he returned from business that day. Perhaps the heat of the weather, and the bore of sitting in a close counting-house when all the world was out of town, contributed towards his unamiable frame of mind. Certain it is that one glance showed Percy that his uncle was even more "crooked," as to his temper, than when he had visited him in the morning; nor was the venom long in showing itself.

"Well, sir," said Ralph Cheyne in a dry, hard voice, quite wooden in its dryness and hardness—"well, sir, what have you been doing since I saw you? reading, I hope, and improving yourself?"

"No, I've not been reading," answered Percy; "it's vacation now, and besides it's too hot to read."

"O dear me! Too hot, is it?" exclaimed Ralph, his voice rising above its ordinary wooden level, to a screech decidedly metallic. "Here's a pretty fellow for you! Why, sir, it's not too hot for *me* to work, not too hot for honest men to get their bread—"

"I mentioned the fact, sir, that this is vacation time," said Percy, very quietly.

"Ay, all *your* time is vacation, I think. You young men of the present day are not worth your salt, positively not worth your salt. You go up to Oxford or what not, and waste your time in gambling and drunkenness, and then come home and talk about *vacations*, forsooth."

"It's very easy for people who have never been to Oxford and who would not be likely to be admitted there, to talk about the life there," said Percy, getting more angry every moment. "There's plenty of that cant talked now-a-days by ignorant people, who think that grubbing in the money-market

is the only kind of work to be recognized; but Oxford doesn't need any defence of its character, and it would be only throwing away good arguments."

"No, don't trouble yourself, I beg," said his uncle with a sneer; "we know too much to be gulled by you or any other Oxford man. But since you talk so much about your work, let me ask you, sir, what good does it all do you? Will your Greek and Latin put bread into your mouth, or money into your pocket, or clothes upon your back?"

"It's only a vulgar error to suppose that Greek and Latin are the sum of Oxford education," replied Percy; "an educated mind fits a man for any post where money is to be honestly gained."

"That's all very fine in theory, young man," said Ralph, relapsing into his wooden voice again; "but let me see how much grist your 'educated mind' would bring to your mill in a year. Why, if you weren't dependent on me for your living, how much do you suppose your education would bring you in? Why, not enough to starve on. You may thank your father for it, too; you might have been a man of property instead of a drag on me, if he hadn't been a careless, extravagant—"

"Come, sir, this is too much!" exclaimed Percy, starting up; "if you can't respect your brother's memory, respect that of my father, for I tell you plainly, I won't stand by and hear his name abused. You seem to think that you have a right to insult me, because I am poor and dependent on you; but the dead are beyond your power, and they ought to be beyond the reach of your insults."

"Finely blustered, my fine fellow," said his unmoved uncle; "you crow as loud as a cock on his own dunghill. But you

can't get over the fact that you *are* dependent on me, and, moreover, that on your good conduct your chance depends. Therefore, I advise you to cultivate a little more diligence and a little more civility, or I may end the bargain between us rather suddenly."

"Perhaps I shall save you the trouble, uncle, some day," said Percy as he left the room.

"Try it!" was all that Ralph answered; but when Percy was gone the old fellow clutched and rubbed his thin horny hands together in evident glee. "The young jackanapes!" he muttered, "but I'll bring his nose to the grindstone, I'll work some of the devil out of him before I've done."

As for Percy, he bitterly cursed the accident which had placed him in his uncle's power, and as he strode up and down his room, exclaimed passionately, more than once: "I wonder how long this sort of thing can last!"

However, he was going to Newhampton in a few days in his uncle's company, and then his promised visit to the Romaines was to be paid; so Percy, being a light-hearted fellow, looked gleefully forward, although his uncle's taunts had sunk deeply into his very soul.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OLD OLD STORY AGAIN.

"It's a brave lad to have swum from St. Win'fred's with the poor lass on his arm." The speaker was Job Marlin, the fisherman, who with his two sons, had assisted Paul and Edith to leave their dangerous position.

"Dick," continued Job Marlin to one of his sons, "lift up the lassie's head, and wrap thy jacket round her, lad."

Dick Marlin, a rough-looking, sturdy fisher-lad, raised the head of Edith as tenderly as though he feared to hurt the beautiful face by his very touch; and as that pale still face lay on his arm, and the long bright hair fell all wet and ruffled over his shoulders, Dick looked uncommonly inclined to cry, in spite of his roughness and sturdy figure.

"She's as cold as a stone, father," he said mournfully, "and I don't see no sign of breathing; it's all over with her, I'm afraid."

"Poor lass!" ejaculated Job; "but it's no use staying here, lad: let's get her away to the town, that's the only chance; look to the lad, Jock, he'll do well enough, and give me the poor lassie."

Job Marlin accordingly took Edith wrapped in Dick's jacket into his arms, and proposed to carry her to Cliffside. Paul

Romaine, who had at first been much exhausted by his exertions and quite unable to speak, was now regaining his former powers; and no sooner did Job Marlin set off with Edith in his arms, than Paul jumped up, and shaking the water from his clothes, ran up to the fisherman, exclaiming, "Is she safe? Let me take her!"

One glance at Edith's white and expressionless face showed Paul the extent of the danger. He took her from the fisherman's arms, and with his burden again safe in his keeping, set forward at a pace which, considering his recent adventure, seemed almost incredible. Job Marlin and his sons followed, and the whole party had proceeded some way up the steep ascent which led to Cliffside, when they encountered Frank Challoner, followed at some little distance by his father.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Frank; "Romaine, is my sister hurt?"

"Don't talk," said Paul, "but rush back to the inn, and get fire, blankets, and hot water. Edith will be all right: I feel her heart. Off with you, Frank!"

Frank, being a sensible fellow, started at the top of his speed to execute Paul's orders. Paul did not offer to stop in his rapid course for Mr. Challoner, so that gentleman was obliged to turn and ask his questions as he almost ran by his side. Paul, who was by this time rather short of breath, could only answer in fragmentary sentences, such as "Cut off by the tide—had to swim—only cold and faint—no fear." On arriving at the inn, they found that Frank had been so prompt that a room containing a fire was ready, blankets and hot water in abundance were provided, and the stout landlady in readiness to receive poor dripping Edith from Paul.

"Don't be frightened, Frank," said Paul, as he wrung the

water out of his long black hair; "Edith is not suffering from drowning: her head never went under the water once, I'm certain; it's the cold and fright which have overpowered her."

"But what on earth got you into such a position?" asked Frank.

"I'll tell you directly, old fellow; but come along and get me a glass of brandy, for I feel rather aguish after my bath." After drinking off the brandy, of which he stood in great need, and while changing his wet clothes, Paul told the brief story of the day's adventure.

"Well," said Frank, "it's a wonderful escape; you mustn't think I am canting, when I call it a Providential escape."

"Cant!" exclaimed Paul; "half-an-hour on that rock, with scarce standing-room between you and the sea, would teach a man to distinguish between true religion and cant, if anything would. But while I put on these bags of the landlord's, which aren't such a bad fit considering they don't reach below the knee, go and see how the patient is."

Frank returned presently to announce that Edith was rapidly recovering her strength and spirits, and that Mr. and Mrs. Challoner were both with her. Mrs. Challoner had at the outset gone into violent and extremely demonstrative hysterics, but finding that no one had time to notice her, she recovered suddenly, and offered to assist. It appeared that Frank and the Summerley girls had left the beach in favour of a ramble in the sand-hills, and had only been driven back by the approaching storm, when they heard the first news of the absence of Paul and Edith.

The Challoner party returned to Fairwater that evening;

and though sundry fears on the score of cold were excited, yet neither Paul nor Edith appeared any the worse for their adventure. In the evening before they separated for the night, Mr. Challoner came up to Paul, and said with a slight accession to his ordinary dignity: "Mr. Romaine, you have to-day saved my daughter's life at the risk of your own, and I thank you for it heartily. I have rewarded the fishermen for their services: to you I can only tender my thanks. Good night."

If any thoughts of opening his heart to Mr. Challoner had crossed Paul's mind, they were effectually smothered by this wet-blanket style of address, and Paul mentally conjectured whether he should have risked his life if Mr. Challoner had been in the same danger that Edith had.

Three days more saw Paul on his way home. He and Edith admitted Frank to their final deliberation, and it was decided, though very reluctantly, that for the present no mention of their love should be made to Mr. Challoner. As for his wife, the idea of making *her* a *confidante* never occurred to them. Frank, however, was not present when Edith and Paul parted in the pleasant room where he had "told his love." Earnestly did the young man plead to be allowed to write to her, and long did Edith put forward her ideas of right and wrong to combat him, all the while longing to yield her consent. At length they parted, and almost the last words which Paul said expressed his firm determination to write to the Post-office at Fairwater hamlet, when if the letters were not fetched away, they must be sold for waste paper. And so ended Paul Romaine's summer holiday.

All was bright and cheerful at Inglefell cottage, and the roses were blooming still. In fact those same roses were never

actually dead and gone at Inglefell; for there are some hearts, few perhaps, but still some in which the roses of life ever bloom, and of such were the hearts of Mrs. Romaine and Maude. And now that Paul was among them again they were doubly cheerful. He could read to them, and talk to them, and interest them in a thousand ways. Loving hearts are easily interested by those they love. The quick woman's wit of both mother and daughter was not long in discovering a marked change in Paul since his return from Fairwater. He was as kind and gentle as ever to them, but he was more abstracted, more dreamy than formerly; he would sit and look long at the moon and not seem to know that anybody noticed him; in fact he did quite enough to betray his secret. That secret, however, he had no intention of keeping, and his mother was soon made his adviser in this, as she had been in every other circumstance of his life. She smiled at the hopeless way in which Paul talked of Mr. Challoner's pride and coldness, pressed her son's hand warmly and lovingly when he gave her a very modest account of the adventure on St. Winifred's island, and finally bade him good cheer, for that "all would come right in the end." Pleasant fiction, so often uttered, so often cruelly disproved!

Shortly after this, Paul received a letter from Percy Cheyne, saying that he was at Newhampton, and quite ready to spend a week at Inglefell. Two days after, Percy was standing in the pretty little drawing-room at the cottage, bright and cheerful as ever, and delighting his friends with his descriptions and praises of the neighbouring country. It seemed as though his late quarrel with his uncle was forgotten, and that all the prospect was unclouded before him. At all events, whatever feelings were at work in him, Percy was outwardly the very

soul of fun and good humour. He would do anything; he sang comic songs to his own accompaniment on the piano; he would rise at six in the morning to improve a border in the little garden, and be ready with a bouquet of flowers in his hand to greet the ladies at breakfast. Then he could draw admirably, considering he had never touched a pencil for years, and wonderfully assisted Maude, whose skill by no means kept pace with her love of art. Then he was ready to race with Paul in the meadow to keep himself "in training," though for what, neither he nor any one else knew. In fact he was the favourite of the little household. But though equally agreeable to all in his manner, Percy valued a few minutes' talk with little Maude more than all the rest of the day's amusements; and though he was careful not to appear to engross too much of her time, yet the drawing lessons and the gardening in which Maude operated really occupied the chief part of Percy's days.

One day Tom Benson arrived, and was introduced to Percy, who received him with his usual good-humoured ease; but it was remarkable that before poor Tom had been in the room ten minutes Percy regarded him quite coldly, and when he rose to go was quite stiff in his manner of saying "good-bye," notwithstanding that he had quite spoiled Tom's talk with Maude by cutting in whenever he found an opportunity. Tom Benson saw enough, too, or thought he saw enough to make him very miserable, and to determine him to do at all risks what he had meant to do for a long time, that is, propose to Maude. So the days went on, and Percy's week had grown into ten days, and his uncle had written to require his return to town. The drawing lessons had gone on, and other things, I suppose, had gone on too; at all events, on the evening

before his departure, Percy found himself returning with Maude from Inglefell village, and they were talking somewhat in this fashion:—

"And so you are not afraid of me, after I have confessed my sins, and are not afraid to run the risk of my uncle's turning me out?"

"I don't think of that," answered Maude, hanging her head, "I think of—never mind what, Percy. But remember our compact: you will go to mamma at once?"

"Instantly, my Maudie; as soon as my foot has crossed your delightful threshold. May the gods be propitious to me! And you don't really care for that big Benson fellow?"

Maude only laughed and shook her head.

That night Mrs. Romaine came into her daughter's room, and, kneeling beside the dainty white bed, took pretty little blushing Maude in her arms, and said softly: "He has told me, dear; and if it will make you happy, *I* am happy; but, my darling, you are very very young, and he is very thoughtless."

I won't attempt to say all that Maude urged in her lover's favour, or how Mrs. Romaine answered her, and reminded her that she must wait a long time, and be patient, and how she had promised Percy not to communicate with his uncle, on the condition that Percy was himself to tell Ralph Cheyne as soon as it could be safely done. All this, however, was said.

On the following morning, when Paul accompanied Percy to the railway station, the secret was announced to him. Now Paul was the person least pleased in this affair. It may be that he had seen enough of Percy at Oxford (where, believe me, people undergo a strange alteration from what

they were *inter suos*) to make him doubtful how far he would be worthy of Maude's love, and how far he would be capable of protecting and cherishing that tender little home jewel. Paul liked Percy Cheyne much—Challoner excepted, he liked him more than any man in Oxford—yet he knew his faults, and he feared that all was not right in the set to which Percy belonged. There was no time, however, to talk on these matters; but Paul determined to speak seriously with Percy when they met in college, now that his new relationship warranted him in doing so. Paul was too generous to let a word of suspicion fall from him in the presence of his mother or sister; but Mrs. Romaine saw, and saw with regret, that her son was not satisfied with his sister's choice.

A few days after Percy had left them, Tom Benson presented himself one morning and asked to see Mrs. Romaine alone. The gentle lady soon saw from unmistakable signs on what errand her visitor had come. Tom Benson was, as I have said before, one of the best fellows in the world; but he was afflicted to a painful degree with nervousness, that weakness which has stood in the light of so many clever men, and has lost many a high class in the Schools at Oxford, and deprived many men of even more important things out in the world. On the present occasion, poor Benson had worked himself into a state of the most painful nervous excitement: he was as red as the roses on the table, and stammered most wofully.

"Very hot, a—extreme—ly hot, isn't it, Mrs. Romaine?" said poor Tom, trying to plunge into the safe shallows of small talk. Mrs. Romaine assented to this important point, and then good-naturedly tried to help on her visitor.

At last Tom Benson got up, and having secured a piece of paper, which he began to twist into pipe-lights with singular

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poet says, that "love, is of man's nature a thing apart," but that "'tis woman's whole existence;" yet for all that, there is a strength and deep-rootedness and stern sterling fixedness in a MAN'S LOVE which, though not so demonstrative, will last as long as any love *can* last in this life. Paul would have stopped to enquire the cause of poor Benson's melancholy, even if Tom had not voluntarily reined up and told him.

"It serves me right, I dare say, for thinking she could ever care about a fellow like me," concluded Tom Benson, when he had told the brief story of his love; "and I'm glad I didn't hear it from her own lips, at any rate; but, Paul, old fellow, it's very hard to bear."

"My dear Tom," said Paul, as he grasped Benson's hand in his own strong brown fist, "I wish to Heaven it could have been as you wish: we should both be happier men."

"Good-bye, old fellow! I'm going away for a time," said Benson, and the next minute he was riding rapidly away.

"'There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will,'" muttered Paul as he walked homeward.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A ROUGH DIAMOND.

We are once more in Oxford. I hope my readers will not regret the change of scene: to me, it is an inexpressible pleasure to find myself again describing the familiar places; I can only hope that my readers share somewhat of the feeling with me. Those who have known Oxford, I have little doubt, will enjoy the mention of the well-known scenes once dear to them; and those who have never yet seen the fair city, will pardon the partiality of one to whom Oxford is, and ever will be, one of the brightest spots in life's journey.

Once again our friend Paul was settled in his rooms; and though the bright weather of the long vacation was rapidly giving place to the fogs and colds of autumn and coming winter, yet Oxford was still pleasant to him; and, after the ease and happy dreams of the vacation, he was more than ever ready to buckle his harness on, and settle to that work to which, in Oxford at least, there is no "royal road." It is wonderful how soon we drop into our groove, and settle to a different kind of life from that which we have lately lived. After the first morning, Paul was accustomed again to the painfully early visit of the faithful David, who with sententious gravity announced the advent of the day to his master,

in these words: "Gone the half-hour, sir; breakfast in your room?" Once more the clanging of the many chapel bells, from half-past seven till eight, precluded the possibility of a comfortable nap; and Paul, who had been able to luxuriate in his leisurely toilets and late breakfasts for the last three months, now once more found himself plunging frantically into his clothes, hurriedly adjusting his surplice, if it happened to be Sunday or saint's day, and so running into the dim chapel half asleep and wishing himself entirely so. But the return from chapel, after the half-hour's service, is perhaps the most pleasant time of the whole day, for there the letters are lying ready upon your breakfast table.

How much is conveyed in those oft-used words: "A letter from home." There are some people, I dare say, who don't care for such common-place things, who even find them "slow," and a "bore," like the country, and even home itself; but for such this story is not written: and I know that most of my readers, at least, will sympathize with me, when I speak of the pleasure which is found by us all, old or young, in receiving a letter from home. These letters are peculiarly cherished by us when we leave home for the first time—at school, for instance, or at college. Whilst our life is so different in these new scenes from the old life at home, it is a privilege not to be lightly spoken of, which enables us to read the old old story of home traced by loving hands for our perusal.

No one looked forward more eagerly to these morning letters than Paul Romaine. Will any sneer at him on this account? You know what manner of man he was, not mawkish or a mild sentimentalist; you know he could fight, and hold his own against strong odds; you know that he was a scholar,

and a man of vigorous intellect; and think you that it was a weakness to look forward eagerly to his home letters? Believe me, had he grown careless about these matters, his case would have been a very bad one. Paul, like many another man in St. Chrys'tom's chapel who expected a particular letter on any particular morning, was given to wander in his thoughts towards the end of the service, which was being minced, or drawled, or droned, or read quickly, according to the Don whose duty it was to officiate. It was very wicked, doubtless, to let their thoughts wander; but it is not a sin peculiar to college chapels.

One morning the wished-for letter appeared on Paul's table when he returned from chapel. It was Edith's first letter to her lover: one which had been gained after repeated entreaties from Paul, and with arguments which would have become a Jesuit better than a member of the Protestant University of Oxford. The arguments were, however, either very strong, or very well put; for from that day Paul received many letters from that same hand, and on the mornings when they were expected, his manner towards the end of the chapel service would hardly have satisfied the minds of the school of Boanerges.

Paul's time was fully occupied about this period. He was reading for honours in Moderations, the second examination of the university, so well-known to Oxford men by the familiar name of "Mods." Besides this, he was obliged to take his place in the boat, and undergo the ordeal of the "trial eights," from which the university crew who row in the race against Cambridge are selected. So well did Paul succeed in the trials, that his name was confidently mentioned as one of the crew of "the 'Varsity Eight," who in the ensuing Easter vacation

would contend with the sister university in the "Derby of the Thames." Paul had some doubts whether he ought to row in the race, considering that the Schools required his presence in the following summer term; but the honour of rowing in "the 'Varsity," and the knowledge that he could by hard reading prepare his work for the Schools, determined him not to forego the pleasure and credit of the race.

During this term Paul saw much of Percy Cheyne, nor did he fail to give him some pretty strong counsel on his future proceedings. Percy listened with perfect good-humour to "the slanging" of his friend, promised to "reform and get his hair cut," and to leave the Phlegethon Club at the end of the year, the only time when his name could be removed; and moreover to avoid all excesses in any visits to the Club which he might pay in the meantime. Percy bewailed his hard fate in not being allowed to write to Maude till his uncle knew of his attachment; and declared that he would tell Ralph Cheyne the whole story at Christmas, come what might. Challoner and Paul met frequently, but not so often as formerly; for the former was reading hard for honours at his degree, or "Greats" as it is familiarly called, the examination taking place in the same summer term as that in which Paul had to run the gauntlet of the Schools.

With the Dons of St. Chrys'tom's Paul had had little intercourse. It is seldom that that august body are sufficiently oblivious of their dignity to allow themselves to mix and sympathize with the undergraduates of their colleges. As a rule they find it almost impossible to sink the Don and assume *the man*. There are exceptions, however, to this rule: there are Dons who are so only in name, and who are the friends and advisers of the men in college, as well as their tutors and

rulers. Such an exception was Thomas Barker of St. Chrys'-tom's. Whilst the Dean considered his only functions to consist in frightening men going into the Schools by telling them that they did not know their work, and threatening them when they came out of the Schools with the horrors of rustication for their failure: beyond this, and a vigorous attention to all matters of discipline, the Rev. the Dean did not trouble himself. Mr. St. Albyn was idle and good-natured, generally took no notice if men cut his lecture, and was very gentlemanly and very useless to any who were foolish enough to ask his advice. Mr. Smee was a dead letter to any man who had ever been guilty of the slightest peccadillo, such as attending a noisy wine within hearing of the sensitive Smee: a long lecture upon the vice of drunkenness would be the portion of the hapless man who only asked advice in some college matter. As for Dr. Benison, the Master, he seldom appeared except at morning chapel, or at Collections, the college examination which takes place at the end of every term. Whenever he met any of the St. Chrys'tom's men he always greeted them with a pleasant smile and a good-humoured nod; and beyond that he did nothing, thereby fully performing the regular duties of a Master. Mr. Barker, however, was a different order of man. I have said that there were certain pious people who shook their heads at him, and doubted whether the college could maintain its character whilst a man so "unorthodox" was harboured amongst its fellows; but it takes a good deal of head-shaking to shake a man out of his fellowship at Oxford, so Tommy Barker remained where he was. With him Paul had become familiar, and often after a lecture was over he would stay behind and have a few minutes' talk with his tutor. There was, perhaps, a kindred spirit between

the rough, shaggy-headed scholar and our friend Paul: at least they understood each other very well; and when Barker proposed to Paul to take a walk with him, our friend gladly complied. To a stranger the manner of Mr. Barker would not have appeared prepossessing. He was decidedly rough, and had a habit of pulling his thick shaggy beard when interested or excited by a subject. But no one could listen to his conversation upon many subjects without being at once astonished and pleased with the honesty and candour of his remarks, and the shrewdness and clear-sightedness which they displayed. During several walks which they took together, Paul Romaine had ample opportunities of judging of his tutor's character; and so favourable an opinion did he form, that though by no means fond of confiding in people as a rule, Paul talked more freely of his affairs, of his difficulties, and hopes and fears, to thorough-spoken Barker than he had ever yet done to any one.

Paul and his new friend had walked one afternoon to the quaint little village of Cumnor, four miles from Oxford, and they had stayed to rest themselves in the ancient grass-grown churchyard. In this church, which is a fine specimen of antiquity, is the monument erected to the memory of Anthony Foster, once the master of Cumnor Place, and the gaoler of the luckless Amy Robsart. Paul had visited the church before, and with the aid of the old clerk, an intelligent man, and a devoted worshipper of Sir Walter Scott, he had mastered the story of the place, and could point to the very part of the churchyard wall which once formed a portion of "the Place," and to the open gap in the village where the veritable "Bonnie Brown Bear" stood till within a late period, when a certain great man of Vandal tendencies pulled it down.

"Are you one of the modern sceptics concerning the existence of Amy Robsart?" asked Paul, as he and Barker stood in the quiet churchyard together.

"Not I," answered Barker. "I never forsake my old belief till I'm convinced by sound argument that I am wrong; and I don't think the Archæological Society will be the means of my conversion."

"I'm glad of that," said Paul. "I thought you might perhaps laugh at me for holding fast my faith in poor Lady Dudley, and for believing in Sir Walter Scott. It's the fashion now, you know, to call Scott *passé*, and to say that he was all very well, but that we want something more now-a-days."

"Yes, and we get it!" exclaimed Barker, tugging at his beard with might and main. "What! is the master, the creator of English romance to be put aside for the ocean of rubbish which deluges the libraries at present? *Passé*, indeed! why, man, Scott wrote "for all time," like Shakespeare: he is the Shakespeare of prose romance; and he is to be passed over for such wretched scribblers of dangerous trash as the sensation school exhibits! I know their sweet productions too well."

"I didn't think that college tutors ever—"

"Ever read anything but classics and the newspapers, you would say; but you're wrong, Romaine. We're not all machines, though some are; we're men still, for all that you young fellows have dubbed us Dons. I read a little of most of the new novels, otherwise I shouldn't be competent to give an opinion about them."

"And yet I assure you that many people whom I thought sensible, have told me that Scott must give place to the new school," said Paul.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLES.

It was early in the spring term, when the reading men at Oxford were busily engaged in their work for the examinations which were to succeed the Easter vacation, and the boating men were straining every nerve in the University Eight which was to compete with Cambridge in that same Easter time.

Paul Romaine was sitting in his rooms, his reading-table before him, and his attention fixed upon the open pages of Homer, when a knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said Paul in no very pleased tone, for he hated to be disturbed when reading.

"Have you heard the news, Romaine?" said Douglas, one of the scholars, entering the room.

"No! what news?" asked Paul.

"Why, there's an awful row in college. The Phlegethon Club have been up to something or other, and the Dons have spotted them. It's all over the college: every one is talking about it."

"This is bad news indeed," said Paul, whose thoughts instantly reverted to Percy Cheyne. "Do you know what men are inplicated?"

"Yes: all the officers of the Club," replied Douglas

"Devereux, the president, Cheyne and Stropper, and several of the members, so I hear. They say that the Dons are going to hold a Common-Room either to-day or to-morrow, to investigate the whole affair."

"I'm glad you told me of this, Douglas," said Paul. "I must see Cheyne at once."

He went to his rooms accordingly, and found Percy sitting by the fire, a book lying open upon his knee, and his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the embers.

"Cheyne," said Paul, as he entered the room, "is this report about the Phlegethon true?"

"Judge for yourself, my friend," answered Percy, taking up a piece of paper which lay on the table; "the conclusion of the whole matter lies in this interesting document."

Paul took the paper and read as follows: "The Dean wishes to see Mr. Cheyne in the Common-Room to-morrow, at ten o'clock, a.m."

"What *have* you been doing, Cheyne?" said Paul; "I thought you promised me to avoid that infernal Club."

"And so I did as much as possible. I've scarcely been there at all; but you see I'm treasurer, and so I'm obliged to attend occasionally, and as ill luck would have it, I was present on the night before last, when all this row took place; so I suppose I shall suffer with the guilty."

"What has been done? what was the row you speak of?"

"Why, the men were playing very high, as you know they do in the Phlegethon, and that wretched cad Chunter lost an awful lot, and then swore that some of the men had not played fairly; and then there was an awful row, and Stropper threatened to throw Chunter out of the window—I only wish he had!—upon which Chunter sneaked off, and positively went

to the Dean and showed up the whole affair, and the doings of the Club for months; so now the Dons are going to break up the Club, and make examples of thec hief members. '*Hinc illæ lachrimæ.*'"

"By Jove! this is a corker, and no mistake," said Paul; "but surely, Cheyne, you would not lend yourself to any such disgraceful affair?"

"If you mean cheating at cards, I answer certainly not," said Percy; "nor do I thank you, Romaine, for supposing such a thing possible. I am quite innocent of everything except being treasurer to the Club; but that will be quite enough; old Swade hates me like poison, and I don't expect that any of the Dons have a wonderful affection for me. However, I don't think they can do much to me, and as long as my ogre of an uncle doesn't hear of it, I don't much care. He would be only too glad of such an opportunity for casting me off, I know."

Paul talked long and earnestly to Percy during a walk which they took together that day; and when they separated I doubt whether Paul did not look forward to the next day's proceedings with more anxiety even than Percy, for was not the happiness of his sister at stake?

At ten o'clock next day, a small band of St. Chrys'tom's men, looking on the whole somewhat disconsolate, betook themselves to the Common-Room, followed by the pitying eyes of the porters, and of such scouts as were hurrying across the quad with their brooms and pails. The Common-Room was a long and solemn apartment, panelled with black oak, and ornamented with various coats of arms. There were the arms of Michael Wynckworth, knyghte, and of Robert Underwoode, citizen of London, founders of the college; and

of Richard Bell and Dorothy his wife, benefactors to the same. There were the portraits of the late Master, and of a stern individual in black armour, supposed from the general expression of his face to have been an ancestor of the present Dean. At the head of a long table in this room sat the Master of St. Chrys'tom's, Doctor Benison. On his right hand was placed the Dean; on his left, the Bursar, Mr. Tillotson; whilst the rest of the Dons, Messrs. St. Albyn, Barker, and Smee, occupied places at this formidable board. The culprits upon whom the Common-Room was sitting were seated near the end of the table, and their faces, as they thus sat, showed a wonderful variety of expression.

Devereux, the President of the Club, and one of its most wild and extravagant supporters, sat with an air of careless unconcern, which, though doubtless assumed, was sustained with admirable *nonchalance*. He looked about the room, and occasionally at the Dons, with a languid expression in his drooping, suspicious-looking eyes, as though the whole affair was of not the slightest importance to him. Stropper, on the contrary, who was Vice-President of the Club, showed unmistakable symptoms of uneasiness, and fidgeted about in his chair perpetually. Henry Chunter, of whom I have said nothing lately, simply for the reason that there was nothing good to say of him, showed that he found himself in a very unpleasant position. Scouted by his companions as a sneak and informer, and placed by the Dons among the guilty members of the Club, Mr. Chunter felt like the white-washed crow among the pigeons, rejected by his own side and not received by the other party. Two or three others of the Club preserved a stolid look of indifference, but they were scarcely so success-

ful as their President. Percy Cheyne sat a little apart from the rest; his face wore a look of unusual gravity, and his hand played impatiently with his watch-chain. And so they waited the opening of the trial.

The Master, after several coughs and clearings of his throat, which showed that he did not at all enjoy the part which he had to perform, at last said: "Gentlemen, we are sorry, deeply sorry to have to summon you here to-day on such an unpleasant subject. But the affair is of such a character as to admit of—to admit of no alternative: the proceedings of this Club, now they have been discovered, prove to have been disgraceful, I may say infamous. If I had had the smallest conception that such things were actually going on within this college, I should have—I say, I should have long ago taken means to end them at once and for ever. We have not been ignorant of the existence of this—this Phlegethon Club, but we had no idea of the character of its proceedings. It grieves me very deeply, gentlemen, that any members of this college should have so far forgotten what they owe to the college, to their friends, and to themselves, as to commit such acts of riot and debauchery as I am well advised have been committed of late. It is, of course, impossible for us to pass over such a grave offence as the present; nor can we allow all to escape because we cannot convict all the offenders. You who are here to-day must know very well that you are not selected at hap-hazard from the Club, more especially you who are officers and managers of the whole affair. I shall not at present say more, but shall leave the Dean to make what remarks he may think fit."

Now was the time for the Rev. Richard Swade Swade to

exert his natural talent for being disagreeable, and he acted up to the occasion. Fixing his eye-glass securely in his eye, and glaring sternly through it at the delinquents, he spread his white soft hands on the table, and began speaking in the purring tones which almost always preluded his most unpleasant remarks.

"You have—a—heard what—a—the Master has said—a—in expressing the—a—regret which we feel at this—a—disgraceful affair. It is not, however, necessary for me—a—to dwell longer on that—a—subject. I have—a—to tell you that the—a—college has decided to punish this—a—very grave offence, very severely, as it—a—undoubtedly deserves. It is—a—my duty to speak to you now, gentlemen—a—individually. Mr. Devereux, you—a—as President of this Club, were of course responsible for its proceedings, and it was—a—in your power to check or allow certain things to—a—proceed. You are therefore to be considered as—a—the very head and front of this—a—offending, and the advice which we—a—have to give you is—a—to remove your name from the college books within—a—four-and-twenty hours; otherwise the consequences must be—a—still more unpleasant to yourself. You, Mr. Stropper, have—a—not only been mixed up in the most disgraceful part of these proceedings, but—a—your general conduct has been far from satisfactory. The college has therefore decided that you must go down for a year, at—a—the end of which time you can, if you wish, again come into —a—residence."

"And if, Mr. Stropper," said the Master, "you rather choose to follow Mr. Devereux's example, there will be no difficulty in acceding to your wish."

Devereux and Stropper listened to their severe sentence, the former with languid indifference, the latter with sullen obstinacy.

The Dean now addressed himself to Percy Cheyne: "You were, I believe, treasurer to this—a—this Club."

"I was, sir," replied Percy; "but I beg to state that I had nothing whatever to do with the proceedings which are now being investigated."

"You needn't—a—a—make any observations at present—a—Mr. Cheyne," drawled the Dean. "You admit that you were an officer of this—a—society; you were—a—I believe present at the last meeting, when the—a—shameful scene at cards was—a—enacted—"

"I was present, it is true, sir," interposed Percy, impatiently, "but no one dares to impute a shadow of dishonourable play to me."

"Really—a—Mr. Cheyne, you must—a—be silent, and listen to what is said, without—a—these interruptions," said the Dean, getting white with anger.

"You shall be heard presently in your defence, Mr. Cheyne," said the Master courteously.

Percy bowed and was silent.

"The very fact, Mr. Cheyne, of your belonging—a—to such a society, knowing as you did its—a—highly objectionable character, is in itself a grave offence. Then—a—you held a responsible position in it, which places you very much on a level with—a—Mr. Devereux and Mr. Stropper—"

"Heaven forbid!" muttered Percy.

"And finally you were—a—one of the few members present at the last meeting of the Club. Taking these—a—facts into

consideration, we—a—are obliged to inflict severe punishment upon you as—a—as well as on the rest; but—a—in consideration of your previous good conduct, we—a—shall only require you to go down for—a—two terms, and we hope that—a—on your return you will be more careful and—a—circumspect, more especially as—a—the Club which has led you into this trouble will be—a—henceforth abolished and—a—broken up."

"If you have anything to say against the justice of this sentence, Mr. Cheyne, we are ready to hear you," said the Master.

"Gentlemen," said Percy, coming forward, "I am ready to confess that I have been unwise and reckless in belonging to this Club; but I do not think that my folly deserves so severe a sentence as rustication for two terms. In my case the punishment is more than commonly severe, as my uncle and guardian, with whom I am not on good terms, would not hesitate to add greatly to my misfortune—very likely to cast me off entirely, in which case my whole prospects in life would be ruined; and surely this is too severe a penalty for belonging to a wild and disorderly Club: for that I took any part in the unfair play of the other night, or of any night, no one has ventured to hint. I hope, therefore, that for these reasons you will in justice impose a lighter sentence."

The Master leaned over and whispered to the Dean, and that worthy shook his head in reply; then Doctor Benison said: "We do not consider the punishment too severe for the offence of being so long a member and officer of the Phlegethon Club. As to your uncle's anger, we have of course nothing to do with that; these things should be thought of earlier. It is not, however, likely that he will do what you say when the

facts of the case are made known to him, as they will be by the Dean, as such a proceeding would be certainly very unjust. We will, however, reconsider your case, and will inform you if we see any cause to alter the sentence of the Common-Room. You can go now."

Percy went out almost stunned by the conflicting emotions within him, and at once went to Paul Romaine in his rooms. Meantime the Common-Room continued their session, and proceeded to "gate" and "chapel" Chunter and the other members of the late Club during the rest of the term: a sentence which when explained means that they were not to "knock into" college after the closing of the gates at nine o'clock, and were to attend chapel *twice* a day instead of once.

Paul heard with great regret the result of Percy's appearance before the Common-Room. "It's a precious hard line," he said, "but I see the principle on which they go: all the leading men in the club must suffer for their influential position. But let's hope they'll mitigate it."

"Oh, trust them for that! I have no chance," replied Percy; "who ever found any of our Dons doing a kind thing? If they'd only gate me, or confine me altogether to college, I shouldn't care; but as soon as my uncle hears of this from old Swade, it's all up with me. Ralph Cheyne will be only too glad to get a convenient peg to hang his wrath upon, and to make a pretext for kicking me out. And then all my hopes are gone, and poor, dearest Maude lost too! O fool, idiot that I have been!"

Presently a porter knocked at the door to ask Paul if Mr. Cheyne was there, and finding him sitting in Paul's chair, gave him a paper, and "hoped the Dons had thought better of it." Percy cast his eye over the paper:

"The Master and Fellows assembled in the Common-Room, upon consideration, see no reason to alter their decision in your case. You may remain in college for three days from this time to make the necessary arrangements, and must then go down, till the ensuing Michaelmas term.

"EDWARD BENISON, *Master.*
"RICHARD SWADE SWADE, *Dean.*"

"I'm sent down, George," said Percy to the sympathizing porter, "though what for I'm profoundly ignorant."

"Very sorry to lose you, sir, I'm sure," said George; "it's a pity as ever you belonged to that Club, I think." And with this undeniable truth on his lips the porter departed.

"'*Sic transit gloria mundi,*'" said Percy, sadly. "You see what my own infernal folly, and the justice of a Common-Room have brought me to, Romaine. Don't talk to me: you can't do any good; I must go and write to my uncle and get it over; but I think I know my fate pretty well."

So saying, and without letting Paul stop him, he hurried off to the Union to write the important letter. Paul, you may well suppose, was greatly unsettled and annoyed by all this. While he felt indignant at Percy's reckless folly, which after all his warnings had at length brought him into this trouble, he felt equally angry at the undue severity of the Dons. It was clear that they were furious at the Phlegethon Club having so long escaped their vigilance, and vexed at the scandal which its existence had brought upon their college; and actuated by these feelings, they were determined to make examples of the leading supporters of the society. Paul consulted his tutor, Mr. Barker, but obtained no comfort: it was

necessary, he said; and, besides there was no appealing against the sentence of a Common-Room.

On the following day Percy entered Paul's rooms, and put an open letter into his hands. It was written in a stiff uncompromising character, as though an iron hand had held the steel pen. Its contents were these:—

"LONDON, *February 26th.*

"You have at last openly shown your real character—one which I have read for some time past. Reckless, unbridled extravagance, self-indulged passion, and inordinate vanity have, as I have long foreseen, brought you to disgrace and punishment. The ingratitude which you have ever displayed in return for the advantages which you have received solely *through my charity*, has now culminated in bringing disgrace on your own name and on that of the firm to which I belong. That firm has, however, been sufficiently injured by you and yours. The son has trodden worthily in the steps of his father, and has even added to his parent's sins, by mingling with sharpers, and becoming ignominiously dismissed from college. Your conduct is such that I consider myself henceforth freed from any obligation to support you. If you suppose that I shall pay for your future *honourable* course at Oxford, you are greatly mistaken. You have repaid my confidence and bounty with ingratitude and disgrace; henceforth you must fight your way alone, I have no more to say or do for you. I enclose a check for fifty pounds, which is the last sum you will receive from me; and part of which you will expend in paying your debts at Oxford, for depend

upon it not a farthing of them will be liquidated by me. You need not make any further communication to me: I wish to hear and know no more about you.

"RALPH CHEYNE."

"A kind and eminently characteristic letter, is it not?" said Percy bitterly; "but '*jacta est alea*,' it's all over with me, that's very clear. I know my kind uncle too well to suppose he would listen to reason or alter his determination; and after such a letter as that I'd sooner starve than try him again."

"Starving's an unpleasant thing," said Paul, sententiously.

"True, and so is eating humble pie with a stony-hearted old sinner," replied Percy. "But I must not stay talking here; 'to-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.'"

"Don't talk in this wild way, my dear fellow," urged Paul earnestly. "Your uncle has behaved like a blackguard, it's true; but you must not think of setting yourself adrift. You have other relations, other friends at least?"

"Not a relation in the world," said Percy; "and as for friends, such as I have would probably tell John to show me the door when they heard my story. No, no, Romaine! I must pay for my folly, though I never thought to pay so dear for it; and, believe me, the hardest blow of all is the knowledge that I must give up my pretty little Maude. Don't talk about it, old fellow; I know all that you would say. I *must* write to her, though, this once; you won't refuse me that pleasure?"

"Refuse you! God forbid!" said Paul sadly; "but let me see you again to-morrow. I shall be at lectures till twelve, but come to me then."

"I'll see about it," replied Percy hurriedly, and left the room.

That night the mail carried on its way to quiet happy Inglefell the following letter:—

"St. Chrysostom's, *February 27th.*

"Dearest Maude,—Do not be astonished at receiving this letter, nor angry that I have disobeyed your mother's command, since, though the first, it is also the last letter which you will ever have from me. You must forget me, dearest; forget that you ever permitted a tender thought for Percy Cheyne to harbour in your loving heart. They will tell you, my love, that I am unworthy of you, that I have deceived you, that I am disgraced; but let your love, though it is dismissed for ever, contradict the calumny. Unfortunate I am, rash and unwise I ever have been, but dishonourable never; and so I fear not disgrace. Maude, dearest, I am sent down, rusticated for some time; and my uncle, who has never liked me, and has ever treated me with harshness and insult, has now cast me off, and left me to my own devices. So the world is before me—God help me! it is a barren world to me! I must fight my own battle alone and unaided; and so all my sunny dreams for the future are melted into air, and the fairest dream of all, dearest, the dream of our love now and our happiness hereafter is banished, and for ever. Forgive me, Maudie, for the pain which I have given you; forgive and forget your unfortunate Percy. You will never hear of or see me more, unless in after years I may achieve something worthy of your notice; but what chance is there of that? Believe only that I loved you truly, and ever shall love you

in my lonely wanderings; and believe, too, that no dishonour attaches to my name. Paul will tell you more of the wretched details: I cannot. Ask your kind mother to forgive the poor outcast whom she once liked and talked with in happy Inglefell. And now farewell, my love, my lost love! May your life be happy as it deserves, and never darkened by a recollection of

"PERCY CHEYNE."

On the following day, Paul on his return from lectures did not find Percy in his rooms, so he at once proceeded to those of his friend, and there saw Percy's scout in the act of "sporting the oak," or closing the outer door.

"Where's Mr. Cheyne?" asked Paul.

"He's gone down, sir, this two hours," replied the scout. "He left this note for you, sir, and I don't suppose he means to come up again, for he sent the money for his battels to the Dean just afore he started, and asked him to see his name took off the books."

Paul took the note, and found in it a brief statement that Percy wished to avoid the pain of a regular parting, that he had taken his name off and was gone for good—or rather for evil, he feared; that it would be useless for Paul to attempt to trace him; but that he would communicate something of his movements in a short time. The letter was written with an air of careless ease, but it was easy to see the aching heart beneath the transparent covering of cheerfulness.

Sick and sad at heart, Paul went back to his weary books; but he read little that day, or for many days to come, in spite of all his efforts.

CHAPTER XX.

"THE DERBY" OF THE THAMES.

THE spring morning dawned warm and genial over the landscape, and the April sun flashed on the bright waters of the Thames. Yes, on the *bright* waters; for although our scene lies no farther from London than among the river-side meadows of Mortlake, yet even here the Thames has lost much of its black and hideous impurity. It is true that the Thames at Mortlake presents a very different aspect from that which it exhibits farther away in the country, where it ripples pure and transparent round its green islets, by Windsor or Maidenhead, or flows along tranquilly under Cooper's Hill and the classic ground of Runnymead, and farther still among the woods and pastures of Gloucestershire, till it finds its source among the distant Cotswold hills. But still at pretty suburban Mortlake we look in vain for the dark, thick, poisonous stream which gnaws greedily at the greasy piers of London Bridge, and breeds disease and death in its foul depths.

Though it was early—for the river-side clocks of Fulham, Putney, and Hammersmith had lately struck seven—the banks of the river were thronged with a motley crowd of people, on foot and on horseback, crushing, pushing, hurrying along the towing-path on the Surrey side, usually the lonely haunt of

bargemen or sanguine anglers. Almost as soon as the first sunbeam had flashed upon the vanes of the neighbouring churches, the visitors had begun to appear. Over every bridge from Putney to Mortlake vehicles of every imaginable shape, size, and condition poured in rapid succession, and discharged their occupants; some to stand on the bridges; others on the banks; others to take up as good a position as they could at Mortlake. Every type of London society was to be seen, and a sprinkling from the country as well. Here an omnibus crammed inside and out with gentlemen of the "Fancy," in white hats and Newmarket scarfs, pressed hard upon an open carriage of ladies and gentlemen who could not proceed for a truculent costermonger, who, mounted on his donkey-cart, had relinquished the lucrative pursuit of selling vegetables through the suburbs, in favour of a day's pleasure—which means, with those of his class, a day's drunkenness. Dog-carts with fast clerks and sporting city "gents" rattled by, careless of policemen and furious drivers of steady vehicles. Here might be seen the prig shopman, resplendent in rainbow-tinted attire and electro-gilt jewelry, driving Arabella in a fast "trap:" to-morrow he who smokes his cigar with such an ineffable air, will be snipping yards of ribbon, and asking in honeyed accents, "What will be the next article?" There were to be seen tall life-guardsmen, out with Mary Jane; sweeps and coal-heavers, with imperfectly washed faces; thieves, skulking among the crowd; policemen in plain clothes dodging them close at hand; thimble-riggers and card-sharpers were busy on the bank; and there were constant shouts of: "All hot here, all hot! brandy balls, six a penny!" "Here you are, sir! cigar-lights, penny a box!"

So much for the *ignobile vulgus;* the upper classes were

plentifully represented. Dashing carriages laden with ladies, others on horseback, rattled by every moment; stout fathers and thin fathers, cross fathers and amiable fathers, sons, brothers, cousins, and uncles, all were there; and all, or nearly all, bore about them a badge, a morsel of ribbon, or a gay rosette, where appeared the rival colours of dark and light blue, the colours of Oxford and of Cambridge.

The day was the great day of the University boat-race; and all these hundreds of people were assembled to see one of the finest sights which our country can boast—the chosen youth of our old Universities striving with might and main in friendly rivalry against each other—a sight far better worth seeing than all the horse-racing and prize-fighting which a civilized country gloats over and encourages.

The boats were announced to start from Putney at half-past eight; but the time passed, and they came not. The multitude, however, were tolerably patient; for an English crowd loves a spectacle so well that it will stand for hours in wind, rain, hail, or snow to catch a glimpse of a great personage, or to see a fellow-man hurried into eternity at the end of a rope. So the people on the bridges and banks laughed and talked, and munched apples, and drank gin out of medicine bottles, and swore and chaffed, as is their wont. Betting was very rife. Sporting characters, who were well up in "Bell's Life," and knew "a thing or two" about the race, offered "three to one in sovs. on Oxford," and displayed their greasy betting-books with great ostentation. Now and then some trifling incident would attract the attention of the expectant crowd. A lubberly fellow would essay to row his sweetheart across the river, and get foul of the bridge; whereupon he was greeted with volleys of sarcasm, not always couched in very

delicate language. Then some adventurous clergyman, wearing the colours of his University, would climb with considerable difficulty to an exalted station on the railings of the bridge, whence his hat would be blown off into the river. This incident was always greeted with a roar of delight from the unwashed; for your tag, rag, and bobtail revel in the misfortunes of their friends (for which they have the Frenchman's saying to bear them out), and their pleasure is almost increased tenfold if the unfortunate one be a shade more respectable than themselves.

At length, however, the watchers who had taken up a position near Mortlake were made aware by the shouting and running and general excitement on the banks that the boats had started. Soon the heavily-laden steamers came in sight; the umpire's boat, and those chartered by the University men, bearing their distinctive flags. And then the centre of every glance, "the observed of all observers," the Oxford and Cambridge boats flashed into sight.

It was no hollow race; for though Oxford was leading by a boat's length, yet Cambridge was coming on bravely, and the shouts from the partisans of either side rose full and unceasingly. Many a heart beat high that day beneath dainty dresses and gay jackets, and many a little hand cased in dark or light blue gloves was clapped in wild excitement.

Beautifully they came on with a steady sweep, the eight oars of each boat flashing in one blue line above the troubled water, the coxswain looking eagerly ahead and managing the tiller ropes with perfect accuracy. Well rowed, brave Oxford! well rowed, gallant dark blue oars! steadily you come on to victory, amid the thundering cheers of lord and peasant, churl and noble, fair lady and shrill fish-wife; on, on! now the goal

is near, the winning-post is in sight. Hark to the music of your oars! row on, gallant Oxford, the race is yours. On they came, the shouts of "Oxford, Oxford! well rowed, Oxford!" almost drowning the rival cries of "Now, Cambridge, put it on! now you're gaining!"

Among the closely packed crowd of carriages at Mortlake was an open barouche in which two ladies were seated. The elder was evidently past the prime of life; but there was a sweetness and gentleness in her still handsome face, which would have attracted many eyes even in the presence of younger women. As it was, many glances found their way to the carriage; but they were perhaps directed to its second occupant, a lovely girl in the first bloom of dawning womanhood. Her face was grave, almost sad in expression, and there was that unmistakable look which tells of recent sorrow; but as the shouts came nearer, and the boats were in sight, this expression gave place to one of anxious and excited expectation: her cheek flushed, her eyes sparkled, and for the moment every thought was merged in the issue of the race.

"O mamma! see, there is Paul," exclaimed Maude, for Maude it was; "he is first in the boat."

Sure enough there was Paul's tall form bending with each mighty stroke as he pulled the bow oar of the Oxford Eight, his face shaded by his broad straw hat, his lips firmly set, and his eyes fixed on his boat. Gallantly came the dark blue oars to their work, the boat leaped through the water, and every stroke made a perceptible difference in their distance from their rival, whose light blue oars were flying furiously along more than two boats' length astern.

"They will win, they must win!" cried Maude. "How nobly they row away from Cambridge; see, mamma! they are almost at the winning-post."

"My brave Paul!" murmured Mrs. Romaine, "I trust he will not overdo it."

Hark! the gun sounds; amid a storm of cheers the gallant Oxford crew toss their victorious oars high in the air; and Cambridge comes in only in time to taste the full mortification of defeat. The great race is over. Then follows the buzz of conversation, the separating of crowds, the harnessing of horses, the popping of corks, and the preparations for lunch. Fond mothers look longingly towards the spot where the two crews are surrounded by an admiring crowd; sisters talk of their brothers' efforts in the race; and here and there is some fair girl, who though she has "never told her love," yet feels more joy in the success of some one in that gallant boat than words would express were she inclined to make a declaration. Some kind-hearted ladies, too, even though of dark blue principles, are sorry for "the poor fellows who are beaten," and are comforted to learn that the two crews, instead of regarding each other with deadly animosity, will feast together in the evening, and banish the memory alike of victory and defeat in the genial wine-cup.

When the excitement of the morning was over, and the river had resumed its usual quiet aspect, and when Mrs. Romaine and Maude had driven away from the scene of Paul's triumph, the sad wan look came back to Maude's face. She whom we have known as the blithe laughing-eyed little Maude is sadly altered now; and though with a woman's fortitude she keeps her sorrow locked within her breast, and tries hard to maintain a cheerful appearance, yet for all that the canker is eating at her young heart, and a shadow has fallen across her hitherto bright path, since she read Percy Cheyne's first and last love-letter.

You who have known what it is to see your fondest hopes crushed in the bud, to find your cherished dreams, your sunny air-built castles shattered like the gossamer web, which hangs covered with the morning dew and is marred by the first rude hand or ungentle breeze; you who have "loved not wisely but too well," you can at least sympathize with our poor little Maude, as she recalled all the pleasant things, the golden pictures, the cloudless future which her dream of love had opened to her eyes, and which were gone now, all gone, and for ever.

Mrs. Romaine did not speak to her daughter on the subject of her sorrow, but the gentle pressure of her hand, and the tender look in her eyes said more than a volume of commonplace condolence.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE STRICKEN EAGLE.

THE "merrie month of May" had come round again in Oxford, and the gardens were assuming their summer braveries. Under the sweet-scented chestnut blooms in St. John's Gardens, the nursemaids sat and gossiped and giggled, as they have ever done, and ever will do till nursemaids and gossip and laughter shall cease to exist. Under the same trees (though apart, of course, from the sirens), a few University men, who were too lazy to row, or cricket, or walk, basked at their ease, and read Tennyson or Dickens, or dreamed that they were through the Schools, and that such a thing as "a plough" was a mere phantom of a disordered brain. Here and there a somnolent Don strolled leisurely up and down the paths, and looked in a contemplative manner at the flowers, or stopped before a garden seat and eyed it in a sternly argumentative manner, as though it were the audience in St. Mary's, assembled to hear his forthcoming Bampton lecture. The gardeners mowed the lawn in a sleepy way, and seemed to have visions of rest and beer, and of lying on their backs bare-headed and thinly clad. All things in fact, animate and inanimate, basked in the warm May sunshine.

Do you wonder what all this fooling has to do with the

story? Be not impatient: let me be cheerful while I may; if you read on you will see that I shall be grave enough presently. Whilst the people were dozing and lolling and lounging in St. John's Gardens—ay, and in New College Gardens too, for that matter—Paul Romaine sat in his rooms at St. Chrys'tom's with the window open, and read logic till he wished that Aldrich and Mansel and Mill, and the whole race of writers on that inviting subject, could be condemned for ever to endure the torment of seeing glorious weather outside, and yet be obliged to stay within and read their own dry pages. Yet Paul read on, though with many a groan at the thought of the delightful cool nooks along the Cherwell, where many a Sybarite was reposing in his punt, with the festive page of the newest novel open before him, and the lazy fish splashing about him, and the insects humming him asleep.

In another room, in Peckwater quad., Christ Church, Frank Challoner was also reading, giving the finishing touches to his work. He looked thin, and pale, and weary; and as he sat turning over the pages of Plato, which reposed upon the mighty tome of Liddell and Scott, his head was resting uneasily on his hand, and his eyes were dim and encircled by a dark ring. Frank had been overdoing it; he had determined to go in for classical honours as early as his standing in college permitted, and to do this he had been obliged to work night and day with little cessation. People who have never been to Oxford, who have no idea of work except the transaction of their daily business, or the more laborious pursuits of stone-breaking and the kindred arts, are given to sneer at the hard work of Oxford and other places; but if they were only permitted to see the long weary nights spent

in hard, unremitting study, the feverish anxiety, the sickening agony of suspense, which attends many men in the Schools, they would, let us hope, be inclined to alter their opinion. Mind, I don't say this sort of thing is the rule at Oxford; but there *are* men who struggle through the thorny paths of ambition, reading even to the death.

So these two men read in their rooms at Oxford; and far away at Inglefell little Maude sat in her room, by the open window, and looked out upon the May landscape. The little cottage garden lay before her, bright with simple sweet-smelling flowers. Beyond, the meadows and undulating uplands rose, green and fresh, studded here and there with cowslips and delicate harebells; whilst from the thick recesses of the copse and dingle, and from the woods over Wheatbourne way the thrush sang his clear bell-like roundelay, and was answered by the skylark, who from his invisible choir in the heavens chanted his hymn to the sunshine. All was bright and cheerful round Inglefell, for Nature is not like man, full of ill-humours and fits of sulkiness (though I confess wintry weather in London reminds one of a sulky temperament); but Maude's face did not brighten at the sight of the flowers, or the sound of the birds, and the echoes of the chiming bells of Alton-in-the-Valley. Her thoughts were far away from Inglefell and its scenes and doings, far away beyond Wheatbourne woods and Ashly Hill, seeking a friend of ours, whom we saw lately leaving Oxford for ever. Yes, poor Percy Cheyne, though now an outcast in a complete sense of the word, had one sure guardian with him, the love of a pure and virtuous woman: surely as good a shield as one can have in this not over spotless world.

I hope you have not sat in judgment on poor Percy, and

condemned him as the Oxford Common-Room did; I hope you have not shaken your head and sighed, and cast this young man out of your memory as a black sheep and a reprobate, who is on no account to be admitted into the communion of the faithful. I allow that Percy had belonged to a very disgraceful club at Oxford—a regular assemblage of reprobates, in point of fact; but he was not a reprobate for all that. He had been wild and noisy, I grant you; he had been admonished by the Dean for singing a comic song on the great grassplot, at two o'clock in the morning; and his face was not unfamiliar to the Proctors. I will not say that he was not fond of wine, and of other things besides, which we should not look for within "the studious cloister's pale" of a college; but Percy was free from the mean vices of many a man who, instead of being an outcast, is at this moment the idol of the drawing-room, as well as the sworn boon companion of the noisiest revel. Percy was no gamester, no drunkard: his greatest foes never dared to impute a dishonourable or ungentlemanly act to him, or to hint that his word was not as good as truth itself. And yet he was wandering on the face of the earth, ruined, as so many young men are at Oxford, and everywhere else, from a want of moral courage. But Maude loved him; and though she never expected to see him again, and knew that his position was compromised, yet she loved him, perhaps better than ever.

Frank Challoner came into Paul's rooms one evening, and said: "Come out on the river for an hour, Romaine; I'm in the Schools to-morrow, you know, and I feel awfully shut up."

"You've been grinding too hard, I'm afraid," said Paul,

looking at his friend's pale and rather care-worn face; "it's a pity you didn't put off Greats till Christmas."

"It's too late now; my coach has been saying a lot about my overdoing it; but how on earth can a man help grinding when he's on the very verge of the Schools and doesn't know his work? Come on, let's have a good pull down to Iffley, and get some of the cobwebs out of my brain."

So they went down to Iffley, and looked at the lasher foaming away, and stayed till the moon came out over the quaint tumble-down old water-mill; and so back to the barges, where the last belated freshman was hurrying along, as the boom of "big Tom" resounded from Christ Church over the otherwise quiet city.

Challoner commenced the ordeal of the Schools the next day, and though thoroughly well up in his subjects, yet overwork and nervousness affected him so strongly that he scarcely did himself justice in the first few papers. Paul saw, with growing anxiety, that Frank looked more worn and fagged every day; he complained, too, of violent headache, and at one time said he should never be able to go through with the work. Paul, though close upon his own examination, gave up much of his time to his friend, and carried off Challoner as soon as he left the Schools each day, and had thrown aside his white tie, and made him row or walk till Hall time. But, at last, Frank was too weak and excited to bear this exercise, and Paul was obliged to row him in a "tub" instead of the outrigged pair-oar which they had hitherto used, whilst Frank would lie in the stern and steer the boat.

At last he went in for his *vivâ voce* examination, and was highly complimented by the Examiner. Once Paul, who was in the Schools watching him, saw him stop in the middle of an

answer, and put his hand to his head. The Examiner asked him if he was ill; but Challoner only muttered something, and starting up hastily, left the Schools. The Examiners looked astonished, and presently sent a messenger to Christ Church to inquire after Mr. Challoner's health. He found him lying insensible, stricken with brain fever, and the surgeon's face was very grave when he told the man that the case was *most* serious.

Paul Romaine was well-nigh distracted by the calamity; his own examination, for which he had read so hard and on which so much depended, was fast approaching, and yet he could not leave his friend's bedside, nor would his troubled thoughts have suffered him to read had he had the opportunity. Of course the first thing was to telegraph to Challoner's friends at Fairwater; and as Paul walked into the telegraph office, and wrote the few words which were to cause so much sorrow and astonishment—"Frank is dangerously ill; come at once"—a thought crossed his mind, would Edith come up to nurse her brother? All thoughts of a selfish nature were banished, however, when Paul stood again by Frank's bed. The poor fevered head was tossing about, the high well-developed brow was burning with the cruel fever which was scorching it, and the eyes, generally so gentle and kindly, were flashing with the fires of delirium. Terrible nonsense it was that poor Challoner talked, and yet wretchedly sad to listen to. The windows of his rooms were open, and the soft summer air came in redolent of the country, sweet with the scent of the leaves and the flowers in many a meadow by the quiet river. Peckwater, in which Challoner's rooms were, was unusually quiet; for the story of his sudden illness had got abroad, and all sorts of exaggerations had added new terrors to the sad

reality. Some said that Challoner had been promised a "First" by the Examiners, and had dropped down in the Schools from excitement and over-work. But all knew that he lay there in his rooms sadly stricken down; and the loud laugh was hushed, and the roaring song sank into silence that night. As Paul sat by Frank's side and watched his friend's troubled face, his thoughts were irresistibly drawn to that glorious lament of the poet over another of his gentle brotherhood, who had fallen a victim to his own too ardent thirst for knowledge. He murmured to himself as poor Frank lay quiet for a little—

"Oh! what a noble heart was here undone,
When Science' self destroyed her favourite son!
Yes, she too much indulged thy fond pursuit,
She sowed the seeds, but Death has reaped the fruit.
'Twas thine own genius gave the final blow,
And helped to plant the wound that laid thee low.
So the struck eagle, stretched upon the plain,
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,
Viewed his own feather on the fatal dart,
And winged the shaft that quivered in his heart.
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel
He nursed the pinion which impelled the steel;
While the same plumage that had warmed his nest
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast."

A fearful dread came over Paul lest Challoner should die before his father or the rest could arrive. The telegram had been sent that evening, and the distance was so great that no one could arrive from Fairwater till late on the following night. And so on through that anxious night Paul sat by Frank's bed; he had obtained leave from the Dean to stay out of college, and now he sat there in the dim lamp-light, trying to read,

and every moment lifting his eyes to the face of the sufferer. Frank was very quiet through the night. Now and then he rolled about, trying to find a cool place for his fevered head, and often he murmured incoherently, sometimes muttering fragments of Greek or Latin which he had been asked in the Schools; then he would cry out to the boats as though he were again cheering the Christ Church Eight along the Isis' banks, and anon he talked of Edith; and once, long after the deep tones of Christ Church bell had struck three, Paul heard him speak of Maude several times, tenderly, passionately, yet always regretfully, as of one whom he might not hope to possess, as lost to him yet dearest to him on earth.

"And this man loved my sister, and I never knew it! Fool, blind fool that I have been!" muttered Paul, as he heard Frank babbling away in this fashion about Maude. "I would to God the day would come! this watching is weary work."

He spoke truth: it is a fearful thing to sit hour after hour through the long quiet night which seems positively *endless;* to be painfully acute to the slightest sound or movement; to hear each sigh, each slightest breath of the patient; to start when the ashes drop softly from the grate, or when the wind slightly shakes the window in passing; to be waiting with a feverish anxiety for each striking of the clock, when the quarters seem like hours, and the hours like days; all this is weary work enough.

In the morning the surgeon said there was no hope, but suggested that a physician should be called in. He arrived, and with him came the Dean, and many of the Christ Church Dons, to see their brave scholar who had bartered his life for the honours of Oxford.

"Is there no hope, Doctor ——?" asked the Dean sadly.

"None, sir; the constitution is too far over-wrought to rally; when the lethargy leaves him he will sink rapidly. It is a sad case: he would have been an honour to Oxford," answered the Doctor.

"They say he is sure of his First," said the Dean. "Poor young man, I fear he will never hear of his success."

"Doctor ——, how long will he live? surely he will not die without his father or a single relative near him?" asked Paul.

"It is impossible to say," answered the Doctor. "If this lethargy leaves him, the rest will be very brief, I fear: I should scarcely think he can survive another night."

But another night passed, and with the morning came Mr. and Mrs. Challoner and Edith. Frank had spoken once during the night, and coherently: the lethargy was gone, but he was evidently sinking fast. When his father bowed his head tearfully over him, and forgot in his great agony all his pride and coldness, self and self-glory were merged in his sorrow and buried out of sight. Frank knew his friends, but he could not say more than a weak word of greeting. They were kneeling round the bed, and Frank's head was supported in Paul's strong arms when he died.

The next days were never forgotten by any of that sad party—days which were doubly mournful from the contrast offered by the happy summer weather, and the happy faces which encountered them at every turn; till one day the great bell of St. Mary's boomed sadly over Oxford, and though in general that sound only conveys the tidings that some member of the University is dead—a matter of interest to a few only; yet in this case, owing to the peculiarity of the circumstances, there were few in Oxford who did not know when they heard

that mournful tolling, that Challoner of Christ Church was dead. The Class-list came out at this time; and many a man who read Challoner's name in the First Class, went involuntarily to look at the room where the dead man lay sleeping, and recking not of the poor honours which this world can give us.

When all was over, and when they had left him to his last rest in Holywell Cemetery, Paul Romaine went, sad and despondent, into the Schools. All was changed to him now: his two friends, the only friends for whom he cared a straw, were lost to him, and his friend and advocate was gone from among the Challoners; everything seemed strange to him in the Schools, and the subjects which he had known thoroughly a little before were like unknown mysteries to him now. The examination ended, however, and Paul, who had been confidently talked of as the safest First in Mods. in all St. Chrys'-tom's, came out with a Second, and was surprised that he had got so much.

I told you that I should have to be grave presently. I dislike a mournful funeral procession pervading every chapter of a book, as much as you can; but unfortunately, if we sit down to describe life as it is, we must not have the sunshine always flashing on our pictures: the clouds must gather occasionally, ay, and must outdo the sunshine too, if you want to be a faithful painter, and not a sketcher of fancies. But we will leave Paul for a while: it is best not to intrude where the shadow of the Death-Angel has been so lately. There is another in thi history whose fortunes are worth the telling.

CHAPTER XXII.

ALONE IN THE WORLD.

It was with a feeling of utter desolation that Percy Cheyne found himself in London after leaving Oxford. As a rule, being rusticated is not so formidable a thing as might be imagined; but in Percy's case, Oxford was relinquished for ever, all his prospects in life were blighted, and all his pleasant *chateaux en Espagne* dissolved into air at one rude stroke. He found himself in London—truly in his case "the city of extremity," with very little money in his pocket, and a firm determination to avoid all his friends. I fancy he need not have troubled himself much on this latter score. Friends who have heard of your misfortunes are as a rule singularly short-sighted and wonderfully forgetful. Percy's first idea was naturally how to earn a livelihood. He had paid a few of the most pressing tradesmen in Oxford, but the majority were left to gnash their teeth in impotent wrath. Even this small outlay, however, had reduced poor Percy's finances to a very low ebb; and accordingly, after spending two days in his shabby lodgings in a state of sulky melancholy, he went forth, reckless,

and yet doggedly determined to "earn a living." How easily the phrase is written! how easily when we are in affluence we talk about it! We think that our intellect, our education, our versatility *must* gain us employment at once; but only put it to the test! Better, far better, to be a common labourer, with muscles like iron, and a good sturdy pickaxe in your hand, than the cleverest fellow who ever delighted a drawing room. Percy walked till he was tired to death day after day, enquiring at newspaper offices for employment as a writer or corrector of the press, at counting-houses for a book-keeper's or clerk's place; but at the one they wanted a well-known writer, and at the other "unexceptionable references:" no one would take him upon trust. Oh! how hard it is to earn an honest living in these working practical days! I wonder if this thought ever by any accident occurs to the "great unpaid" who administer the laws of our realm so admirably, and who consign a poor wretch to the tender mercies of the prison-house because he "has no visible means of livelihood." Weary and disgusted with everything, Percy Cheyne awoke to the fact that his money would not hold out much longer, and that a certain unpleasant attendant called starvation would soon be upon his heels. Then, and only then did Percy recollect his quondam associate, Tony Kestrel. It was a sad falling-off for the young Oxford man, who had ruffled it with the best in the High, and held his own in the billiard-rooms and cricket-fields and fives'-courts of dear old Oxford. Must he write to his disreputable acquaintance Kestrel? a man who abjured gloves, who smoked inferior cigars in the open streets, and who was not innocent of the furtive glass of beer at the bar of the much-frequented public. But Poverty, says the proverb, makes us acquainted with strange bed-fellows: at

any rate, it rubs off the gloss from our clothes and our opinions very soon; and so Percy, after a struggle (and shall we blame him?) wrote to Allston Mortimer, known formerly as Tony Kestrel, at the Post-office, York.

Several days passed before Percy received an answer to his letter: at last came a note from Tony Kestrel, bearing the post-mark of Stillport, a small seaside town in the west. Tony appeared to feel no surprise at Percy's changed circumstances: he spoke of his prophecy on the subject, and assured his friend that he was really very fortunate in becoming an actor, which he might now do under very favourable auspices. Finally he urged Percy to join him at Stillport with all haste; and thither our friend went, though with no very sanguine ideas of his coming fortune. The town of Stillport is a highly typical sea-side place. Not many years ago it was merely a fishing village, skirting a wild storm-beaten beach, and filled with an amphibious population of very lazy, very drunken, and not over clean fishermen. Society, however, which is ever extending its net to catch every available spot upon earth whereon to erect its palaces, happened at last to cast its eye upon Stillport, and thinking that something might be made of it, straightway determined that something should be made of it. So Stillport grew and multiplied; and, in the year of grace which I am now dealing with, it was a semi-fashionable watering-place for some months in the year, possessed a long esplanade facing the sea, three or four tolerable streets lined with third-rate shops, a circulating-library where raffles were advertised in the window, and where the newest novel was three months old, and never "in" when you wanted it. There was a Town Hall, too, lately built under the auspices of an enterprising and public-spirited Mayor,

whose son was equally enterprising and public-spirited; and, having made a fortune as some said in herrings, was Mayor of Stillport at this present writing, and a very great man indeed. The Town Hall was an uncompromising building, of that red glaring style of architecture which at once stamps an edifice as a Prison, a Hospital, or a Town Hall. Here when the mercantile spirit of Stillport chose to unbend and relax itself, certain "entertainments" were given, ranging from the heavy lecture on Palestine by a bald-headed gentlemen in spectacles, to the noisy concert of the irrepressible nigger serenader. There were two churches also in Stillport, which were as far removed in doctrine as they were near in situation. The Reverend Sackbut of St. Bartholomew's was of your true Evangelical type; a good man, I dare say, but too fond of advertising the fact to the public. Deep-chested and deep-voiced was Mr. Sackbut, large as to his person and his white tie, severe in his deportment, and partial to the circulation of tracts. On the other hand, the Reverend Dulcimer of St. Agatha's was an advanced Anglican—so advanced, some people said, that it was a hard matter to tell where Anglicanism ended and Popery began. Very long was Mr. Dulcimer's coat, very smooth was his waistcoat—one of those known by the popular though irreverent name of "M.B. waistcoats;" very smooth, too, was the young divine's face; and though he had never shown any very remarkable talents for anything but Church upholstery, he was generally considered, especially by the young ladies of Stillport, to be "a heavenly man." There were very few points indeed upon which the brethren of St. Bartholomew's and St. Agatha's coincided; and there was one especial subject of difference between them: this was something with which we have to do presently—the Royal

Stillport Theatre. How such a place as Stillport ever contrived to start a theatre was a subject of mystery to a great many people: that it had been in most cases a losing speculation was matter of history. Several managers had opened it and redecorated it, and advertised performances of every description, from the heavy drama of domestic life to the burlesque and extravaganza beloved of the mob. But it would not do; at least it never had done yet to any extent; and though the officers from the neighbouring dépôt were too glad to while away their time in the close little theatre, yet even their patronage did not draw sufficiently large houses to make the thing pay. Upon the question of this theatre the clerical lights of Stillport were greatly at feud. I believe that originally they both discountenanced it alike; but no sooner did the Reverend Sackbut begin to fulminate about the certain destruction which must come upon the untoward and perverse generation of Stillport—a generation which frequented stage-plays, and listened to the immoral gibes of actors, than his rival at St. Agatha's gave his countenance to the theatre, and declared that so far from destruction, much good and much avoiding of evil might result from such innocent amusement as a good play well acted. Lately, too, the Mayor had lent his powerful influence on the side of the stage; and when such a man as the Mayor of Stillport said the theatre should succeed, who might contradict him? Accordingly, during the last winter the theatre had been open for four nights a week, and had provided such *morceaux* of fifth-rate acting as the circumstances and the company would permit. During this spring, however, the place had been shut, and a horror of great desolation had fallen upon Stillport, when the manager to whose company Mr. Anthony Kestrel belonged

determined, after certain preliminary enquiries, to take the theatre for a short time, and devote himself to the work of reawakening the tastes of Stillport, and recalling the banished players, who for the last two or three months had remained "disgracefully silent."

CHAPTER XXIII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

Tony Kestrel welcomed Percy Cheyne with his usual air of rollicking good temper. He was one of those careless easy-going men who, though very frequently in trouble, never feel it half so much as other people; a man who was contented to take things as they came, and never troubled his head about to-morrow or the things thereof. He was not, however, the very best companion for Percy in his present frame of mind. Our unfortunate friend felt that he had lost all, that his path in life had been effectually dug up and destroyed, and that his further course was filled up with the hardest and most uncompromising of flints, and the very sharpest of broken bottles, so to speak. As he entered Stillport from the dingy stuffy little station where the train had left him, Percy could not help recalling vividly some of the scenes among which he had hitherto lived. His life in London, sufficiently pleasant, though to a certain degree marred by the proximity of his uncle, but, above all, his days and nights at Oxford, came back to him in the midst of the shabby little streets of Stillport, and for a time made him about as miserable as a young man can be. He thought over lost friends, lost associations, lost plans, lost castles in the air—those delightful buildings which

all of us, even the most unimaginative, frame sometimes; and as he thought, he realized in its full intensity the truth of Dante's words as told by another poet: "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

From these thoughts Percy was often recalled by some remark of Kestrel's; but no sooner was his companion silent, than Percy was back again digging in his newly-made grave of buried hope, and smelling nothing of "the rose above the mould."

"These are my lodgings," said Tony Kestrel, stopping before a small house with a green door, green area railings, green shutters, and a notice in the window to the effect that mangling was done there. "These are my lodgings, 'this is the spot; stand still, my steed!'—that is, pull up, Percy, and let us enter with what speed we may."

It was a favourite habit with the actor to adopt a kind of mediæval phraseology, picked up partly from plays and partly from novels, and of which Tony was on the whole rather vain.

"Art thou not athirst, my Percy? a beaker of the best wine—that is to say a pot of mild ale—shall be yours in a moment."

Percy laughed in spite of himself at his companion's nonsense, and when the aforesaid beaker arrived he had not forgotten his Oxford habits sufficiently to refuse it.

"And now to business, hateful word!" said Tony Kestrel, sitting on the least broken of two chairs, the third and unbroken one having been assigned to Percy. "There's a rehearsal on at the theatre in half-an-hour, and I'll introduce you to old Derry then. He's not half a bad fellow, I assure you, not a fellow of infinite wit certainly, nor one to call spirits from the vasty deep with the slightest chance of their coming;

but still, as things go, indifferent honest. Recollect he's a bit of a screw, will try to engage you for nothing, and forget that you're not drawing a large salary; but stick to him and he'll be all right, especially if he thinks you're a star."

"But I'm not a star: I'm too much under a cloud," said Percy with a sort of grim delight which a man feels in joking at his own misfortunes. "Besides, what am I to tell him? he must not know anything of my antecedents."

"O no! we never mention them," answered Tony, fixing a very doubtful cigar in an elaborate amber mouthpiece, and proceeding to light it with great deliberation. "You must change your name, of course. I am no more Tony Kestrel; such a personage is a myth, a shadow: the substance is Allston Mortimer, for whose history see small bills and large posters. As for being under a cloud, my dear fellow, you must forget the past, and say with Richard,—

> "'All the clouds that lowered upon our house
> Are in the deep bosom of the ocean buried.'"

"How easy it is for a fellow who is not in trouble to give advice to one who is," said Percy savagely; for all this quoting and gaiety on the part of his friend was gall and wormwood to him.

"Seriously, old fellow, don't think me unkind," answered the actor, laying his hand kindly on Percy's arm, while with his other hand he carefully tapped his cigar ash against the table. "I'm really sorry for you; but my idea of life is to take it as it comes, to try a new road when the old one gets stopped up, or anything of that kind. Look at me, now; I've tried a good many things in my time, from sensation novels

to halfpenny ballads; and here I am at the mature age of four-and-twenty, in receipt of a tolerable salary, and, above all, the light of old Derry's company and the idol of the provincial stage. I could say more, but 'on their own actions modest men are dumb.'"

"Well, your philosophy is the right one, I believe," said Percy, who was not unlike the actor in a certain reckless, sanguine temperament; "I must at least try to bear whatever comes; and if troubles are very thick and overwhelming, I must cultivate a Stoic's smile and say with the murderer in 'Macbeth,' 'Let it come down.' But still," he added with a sigh, "I can't help thinking of the glorious days, the genial nights at St. Chrys'tom's."

"O my life in Egypt, the dalliance and the wit!" quoted Tony Kestrel as he threw away his cigar. "But never mind; corn in Egypt is what we want now, so come along to the theatre. What shall I say your name is?"

"Oh! anything. Say Percival."

"What's in a name? A great deal, I can tell you; and so Shakespeare, who was an actor, ought to have known. But here we are at the stage-door; and now to rehearsal, and then to draw the manager." They passed through the little doorway, up a flight of very dirty stairs lighted by a jet of gas, and, threading a narrow passage, came upon the stage of the Stillport Theatre.

I am not going to weary you with a description of a theatre viewed from behind the scenes: it is a favourite bit of writing for all sorts of people, many of whom were never behind the scenes in their lives; and, as I want to avoid clap-trap as much as possible, to atone for occasional pages of nonsense, I shall not dilate upon the dullness and dirt and closeness of

the unknown world which is never seen by the theatre-going public. Tony Kestrel, as principal performer in the company, led the way with a very important manner, as of one who knew his own position and intended to maintain it in its integrity. On the narrow confined little stage, facing the rows of dingy little boxes and uncomfortable pit, the whole of the company was assembled.

The manager, Mr. Marmaduke Derry, or as he was most commonly called, Duke Derry, was seated on a camp-stool by the second entrance on the left, very busy talking, and varying his talk with great versatility from reproach to praise, from good-humoured raillery to furious invective, as the occasion or his own temper suggested.

Mr. Derry was an Irishman, and possessed all the most leading qualities of his nation; plenty of talk, plenty of good humour, a decided keenness where his own interests were concerned, and a strong dislike to work hard for his own or anybody else's benefit. He had had plenty of experience in provincial theatre management, and prided himself on knowing the taste of the public, and as to what style of performance would "draw;" but as to the Thespian art itself, Duke Derry was profoundly ignorant. There were legends current that he had at some remote period played Horatio in "Hamlet;" but public opinion was strongly in favour of his having never been more than "a super," and having carried a halberd, or banner, or lance, as the circumstances required, for the modest pittance of one shilling per night. In appearance Duke Derry was short, stout, and middle-aged, with a red round face, the most remarkable feature in which was a large nose, redder by several shades than the rest of his face. He was rather bald, and what hair he had was short, wiry, and rough.

No sooner did Tony Kestrel make his appearance, than the manager exclaimed, "Come, Mortimer, we're all waiting for you this ten minutes, and how we'll get the piece out at this rate I'm sure I don't know."

"I'm ready, sir, quite ready," said Tony, throwing off his hat; "but I've a gentleman here to see you about business."

"Very glad to speak to him after rehearsal; can't stop now. Take a seat, sir, if you can find one, as one might say. Now Mr. Dashwood, *will* you attend to business, sir? Are you all ready? clear the stage, and call on the first scene."

The actors and actresses trooped off to the wings and green-room, except Tony Kestrel and one or two more, who were on in the first scene of what Percy soon decided was a very stupid comedy. Presently Tony came off, and proceeded hastily to introduce Percy to the company, as his friend Mr. Percival, while the manager and call-boy were roaring themselves hoarse for the actors in the second scene. Percy was by no means struck by the general appearance of his new associates. I dare say he was fastidious; but although the young ladies of the company made themselves very agreeable, as is the fashion of their kind when they meet a good-looking young man for the first time, Percy saw nothing more in them than a mob of rather dowdy girls, in bonnets and cheap silk dresses, who were not "his style" at all. As for the men, they were common-place enough. There was Singleton Dashwood the tragedian, a short weak-eyed young man, with a rather forbidding cast of countenance, on which early sorrow, or professional exigencies, or potent liquors, or all three combined, had imprinted a look of hopeless melancholy. He had long, lank, moist black hair, and was generally considered by the company to cherish a secret and hopeless affection for some star once seen in a London theatre. Then there was

Betterton Smith, who played the light villain parts, the gentlemanly swaggering captain, who has very fierce whiskers and seductive manners, and turns out to be a forger at the end of Act I. He was a dandy in his way, wore a white waistcoat, and carried an eye-glass. These two men were looked upon as the great lights of the company, with one exception, and this exception was Croucher the comedian, a man who of all the company attracted Percy's notice for more than an instant. We have all heard stories of clowns being the most miserable of men in private life, just as undertakers are the most merry; and we have all read or heard tell of Grimaldi and his wretched home life. I suspect a great many of these stories *are* stories, and nothing more. I see no reason why a clown, if he is tolerably well off, should not be as happy as anybody else; but in the case of Croucher the comedian there was no mistaking the melancholy which marked his face. A very different melancholy from that of Mr. Dashwood; a certain care-worn, worried, anxious expression about the mouth and eyes, and deep lines in the forehead which even paint could not entirely conceal. And yet Croucher did not obtrude his melancholy: on the contrary, he tried to be cheerful, and succeeded in conversing with tolerable gaiety; but if you watched him when unemployed and silent, as Percy did, you saw his pale face assume its old worn look, and the weary haggard expression come back into the eyes—eyes which in acting were wont to set more than the table "on a roar," and which by a single glance could convulse a country theatre from pit to gallery with uproarious laughter.

When the rehearsal was over, the manager came up with Tony Kestrel to where Percy was standing, looking, it must be confessed, disconsolate enough.

"Well, Mortimer," said the manager briskly, "and what does your friend want with me? Happy to serve him if I can. What's his name, did you say?"

"This," answered Tony, extending his hand towards Percy, "is my particular friend Percival, friend of my early years, companion of my joys and sorrows—'a man, take him for all in all, we shall not'—"

"There, that will do, Mortimer," interposed the manager impatiently; "cut your melodrama now; this is business, a matter of buying and selling, as one might say. Do I understand, Mr. Percival, that you want an engagement in my company?"

"Such is my wish," said Percy.

"My friend," exclaimed Tony again, "desires to leave uncongenial pursuits for a new path: 'to-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.' The world has proved cold to him in one character; he would come before the world in another, or rather in several others."

"Exactly so! some unpleasantness at home, I suspect: case of prodigal son, as one might say. Hope nothing serious, Mr. Percival," said the manager, looking curiously at Percy.

"I am not free to speak of my former life," answered the young man coldly; "nor do I see any necessity for it. I am anxious to begin a new life, to earn my bread in a position where I shall not be known or talked about by former friends. Be assured, however," he added with a smile, "that I am no escaped criminal, or anything of that sort; nothing half so interesting. I am only an unfortunate man."

"You speak well, sir; very good light tragedy style, by Jove! And so you want to act; have you tried it at all?"

"My dear sir," interposed Mr. Kestrel, "Percival is, though

as yet an unworshipped hero, fit to wear the buskin with any man that writes himself actor. Take my word for it, Mr. Derry, and thank me into the bargain. Besides, is he not a writer? Has he not the fertile brain, the educated intellect, trained at the univers—— that is, I mean, improved by prudent culture? He can write plays for you by the cart-load."

"Ah! that's something like," cried Mr. Derry, rubbing his hands; "an author attached to the company would be the thing, the complete thing, as one might say. What do you think, Mr. Percival? could you knock off a little bit of a comedy for us; something light and sparkling for six characters, say?"

"Why, really, sir," answered Percy, smiling, "I scarcely know: Mortimer has reckoned up my accomplishments too favourably, I fear; but I think I could write what you want."

"Well then, now let's see! can you get it done by the end of the week? to-day's Monday: we might put it in rehearsal by Friday. And just think over a bit of sensation drama, will you, while your hand's in?"

"But, my dear sir, I can't promise to produce plays so fast; the language alone requires care and revision."

"Not a bit! all a mistake, I assure you. We don't want language; the public doesn't care a button about language: what we want is situation! Something startling, something new and original in situations, and you may use up any language that you can lay your hands on. Now I've got a lot of old armour that I bought a bargain the other day, and I want to work it in somehow. Can't you try something mediæval, now, something with a baron in armour, and a burning castle, and a lady chained down in the dungeon while two knights fight for her in the flames? We've got lots of red

fire, and four capital helmets. Think it over, that's a good fellow. And now about the playing: I think I may take Mortimer's word for you. We'll cast you in your own comedy first, so look sharp with it. You'll find a lot of French rubbish which I sent over to Mortimer's lodgings the other day. Perhaps they'll help you if you can read French: Mortimer can't, I expect. As for salary, Mr. Percival, we shan't quarrel about that, I dare say. Those that work with a will get their due from me, you'll find. And now I'm sure Mrs. Derry will be glad of your company to dinner—plain food, rough and ready, as one might say; and you can come too, Mortimer, if you like."

Thus Percy Cheyne, late of St. Chrysostom's College, Oxford, found himself embarked upon the stage of a provincial theatre.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FALLEN STAR.

WHILST the first flush of novelty continued upon his work, Percy Cheyne succeeded very well. He found that adapting French plays was very easy work, and although he was at first by no means pleased with his performances, yet as the manager professed himself delighted, Percy gradually came over to his opinion. The comedy which Mr. Derry had begged Percy to write was ready in a short time. I dare say it was a wretchedly dull affair: Percy thought so himself; but Derry declared it would draw, and that was sufficient. It was with a strange mixture of amusement and annoyance that Percy saw himself placarded on huge glaring posters all over Stillport. He could not go out without reading that "an entirely new and original comedy, from a well-known and popular author's pen, would be produced in a few days with new scenery and dresses;" and that "a gentleman of acknowledged talent and decided histrionic powers would have the honour of appearing for the first time before the public."

When the night arrived, the people of Stillport rose as one man, and flocked to the theatre. They had been bored to death with each other's society, and were thankful for anything new.

Mr. Derry, as he looked through the small slit in the curtain, sacred to the eyes of managers, was delighted to see the very circumscribed space in the theatre filled to overflowing. There, in the centre box, resplendent in the full glory of his presence, was the Worshipful the Mayor of Stillport, who, as I told you before, was a very great man in his own eyes, and in the eyes of the majority in Stillport; for in your small country towns people are generally content to see with one or two pairs of well-approved eyes, and to take views and opinions of their neighbours at second-hand. Then the military had graced the theatre with their presence; and the gallant fellows might be seen lounging in easy attitudes, and softening down and concealing the ferocity of the warrior under the most affable and (it must be confessed) most vacuous of smiles. There was Ensign Fluffy, who had one idea, and that a wrong one, viz.: that he was a judge of horses, which he was not, and was most unmercifully fleeced in all transactions of a horsey character. There, too, was Captain Gerkin of the Buffs, a fiery-headed little man with long bristly moustachios, and many others, among whom appeared conspicuously the grizzled beard and grim face of old Major Saltash, a stern old veteran, whose face was as distinctly marked with scars as a rifle target at Wimbledon after a day's competition. In a word, the manager saw from his post of vantage what the "Stillport Mercury" called next morning "a galaxy of rank and fashion, ready to offer an ovation to talent, and to uphold the time-honoured dignity of the stage."

Appearing before a crowded audience upon any stage, even that of a provincial theatre, is for the first time a nervous undertaking. Do you not remember, reader, when you rashly promised to take part in Mrs. Brown's Private Theatricals?

Do you not recall the hours of patient study given to your part, the bullying which you underwent from the stage-manager, the mistakes you made, and the shortcomings of the much-enduring prompter? Do you not call to mind the eventful evening: how nervous you were, how champagne and sherry were alike unable to sustain sinking nature, and how, finally, your silk stockings came down in the most critical and exciting scene of the play? If you have undergone any of this, you will agree with me in thinking that it was a trying moment for our friend Percy when he first appeared before the foot-lights in his own comedy as a young man of fashion. It is said (I suspect it is a libel) that Oxford men are by no means deficient in that valuable quality which is known to the uninitiated as *impudence*, but to the more enlightened as *cheek*. Be this as it may, Percy was tried to the uttermost, and his voice trembled a good deal at first. The audience, however, were very lenient: they applauded the novice warmly; none the less, I fancy, that he was a handsome and gentlemanly-looking fellow, and, like the iniquitous Canon of Tom Ingoldsby's legend, "he had a merry eye." So Percy took heart of grace, and warmed to his work, and ended by being called before the curtain; and had he not been too much excited, he might have heard the gratifying remark of Ensign Fluffy to his friend Lieutenant Goby, that "that fellow wasn't a fool by any means; gentlemanly-looking fellow too, considering his position, 'pon my soul."

Percy was not ill-pleased with his success. He had not had too much of it, and therefore could afford to be pleased even with the plaudits of a country audience. Besides he had not belonged to that large body of men at Oxford whose motto is *nil admirari*—a motto which they carry with them through life and which becomes an incubus, a skull at the feast, a mon-

ster, and one like that of Frankenstein, of their own creation. So Percy was pleased, and received the manager's congratulations with a very good grace. The comedy had a fair run; but if the people of Stillport were not tired of it, Percy Cheyne was, and as he now held a very leading place in the company, he worked upon the manager's feelings so far as to make him promise to produce a play of Shakespeare.

"Not that I consider Shakespeare is a drawing concern as a rule," said Mr. Derry, "unless you've got some new idea, such as a foreign accent, or a new style of dress; and besides, he's very expensive to put on the stage, is the Immortal Bard, very expensive."

Percy, however, "drew" the manager daily, as Tony Kestrel phrased it; and at last it was decided, and duly announced all over Stillport and its neighbourhood, that Shakespeare's drama of "Hamlet" was in active rehearsal, and would shortly be produced in a style of unexampled magnificence, the part of the Dane (why do play-bills *always* speak of Hamlet as the Dane?) would be sustained by the popular actor, Mr. Percival.

Percy thought he could play Hamlet, as all young actors think, no matter even if they stammer or have but one eye. Our friend, however, really "had it in him," as Mr. Derry forcibly remarked; and though his acting was scarcely that of Kemble or Phelps or Fechter, yet "the Dane" had no cause to complain of Percy's impersonation. When one or two rehearsals had taken place, it became evident to Percy that there was no one in the company capable of playing Ophelia to his Hamlet. The lady who had been cast for that part, besides hair of a most uncompromising red tint, had a decided brogue, and a general sprightliness of manner, not to say roughness, very foreign to the timid grace of the gentle, sad

daughter of Polonius. One day Percy was so enraged at the acting of this sweet daughter of Erin in the "mad scene," that he went off at once to the manager and announced that unless "that stick," as he irreverently called Miss O'Shannon, were removed, he should at once throw up his engagement and leave the company to play "Hamlet" as they best might.

Mr. Derry was much perplexed at this dilemma. He admitted that Miss O'Shannon was a "stick" of the most heavy and clumsy order, but what could he do? Who was there in the company to play the part? To this Percy promptly responded that there was no one, and that the manager must infuse new blood into the company. Duke Derry grumbled a good deal, but in a day or two announced that he had, at the cost of great expense and trouble, secured the engagement of a young lady from London, a star if not of the first magnitude in the horizon of Cockaigne, yet of sufficient brilliancy to dazzle a provincial audience. Then Mr. Derry proceeded to dismiss Miss O'Shannon in a very summary manner, telling her plainly his opinion as to her character as a "stick"—remarks which that young lady took in very bad part indeed.

At the next rehearsal the manager led forward the newly arrived star, and introduced her to Percy and to the company generally as Mademoiselle Gabrielle, who was to perform the part of Ophelia. Gabrielle took very little notice of any of the company except Percy; and as our friend felt flattered by her unmistakable display of good taste in this particular, he looked at her more curiously than he might otherwise have done. She appeared to be about his own age, and was certainly a beautiful woman—beautiful without any of the artful aids which actresses and others not on the stage are fond of using. She was dark enough to have been a Frenchwoman,

with a clear olive complexion, through which the bright blood could be seen mantling with every emotion which agitated her sensitive nature. Eyes dark, lustrous, and dreamy, with that kind of far-away look which, when recalled from its distant wandering, can so easily and so potently melt into love or flash indignant scorn, now looked on Percy with a slight expression of newly awakened interest, and regarded his companions with cold and distant indifference. She was an actress in manner; she had the tricks of the stage, the peculiar walk and style of address which are almost universal with those of her profession; but Percy thought that he could trace, even in a first interview, much of the woman still existing apart from the actress, and that he could discern a powerful and strongly-marked character, potent for good or evil, in the beautiful haughty girl who stood before him reading her part carelessly enough, and yet with an evident appreciation of the character.

The other members of Mr. Derry's company regarded Gabrielle with a kind of envious respect, as a real London star; and the very unequivocal contempt with which she treated them did not fail to increase their respect, though it called forth the evil sentiments of "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." Between Percy and the actress an intimacy very soon sprang up. These connections grow up more quickly behind the scenes than within the frigid zone of society. The peculiar and unreal mode of life developes passions both good and evil with singular rapidity. Percy was, as we know, in a situation which would have made some men sufficiently miserable; his position and prospects in life were all gone, he was "fallen from his high estate," shut out from the society to which he had been accustomed; and,

above all, the cherished dream of his young strong manhood, his love for Maude Romaine—a love whose influence he had fondly hoped would keep him right, and guide his steps clear of the many traps and pitfalls which are being perpetually set for us—this was gone, irrevocably lost, as he feared; for if ever he dared to hope that he might retrieve his fallen fortunes and once again in his proper position claim her love, he was sure to dismiss the hope as a vain delusion, and become more miserable than ever. And yet with all this Percy was not very wretched, not half so much so as many people who have apparently no earthly cause for discontent. He possessed that enviable constitution which enables one to throw off a sorrow and forget it in any new excitement, and only to return to it when the nerves are unstrung and the system weary and worn out. For such a temperament nothing could be more favourable than his present mode of life. It was almost a continual excitement. And now there was a new source of interest in Gabrielle.

Percy very quickly dropped his close intimacy with Kestrel (fickleness is a sure trait in men of this sort), and devoted most of his time to the actress. To be in the company of a woman as pretty and as clever as Gabrielle, was a privilege which many a veteran warrior of the town would have valued highly: it is not surprising, therefore, that our friend, who was after all a very young and inexperienced man, should be almost intoxicated with the charm of his new position. Had Gabrielle been only a pretty flirt, or a designing disciple of the fast school, Percy would very soon have found her out and left her in disgust. But she was neither: gentle and winning in her manner, with a touching simplicity, which had survived the fiery ordeal of an actress's life, she possessed a quick and

active if not a vigorous intellect, and could talk well on subjects which are generally discussed but tamely in certain great drawing-rooms which you and I wot of, reader, because the high and mighty company does not feel itself up to the task, and is afraid of floundering into some Slough of Despond and remaining inextricably stuck there. Gabrielle discovered Percy's secret immediately, and when the curtain fell after the first performance of "Hamlet," and he had led on the beautiful Ophelia amid the thundering applause of the theatre, Gabrielle laid her little hand on his arm, and looking up into his face, where the flush of excitement was already replaced by a look of intense sadness, said softly,—

"You are unhappy. I saw you start and change colour once to-night as though you recognized some one in the house. Will you not tell me your story? you are no actor, though you play so well. Will you not tell me? you may trust me."

"I have nothing to tell, Gabrielle," answered Percy, "at least that you would care to hear or I to talk about."

"But why did you start to-night? at least tell me so much."

"I fancied I saw a face which I knew: it was a mistake. And now, good night."

"Stay a moment! don't leave me yet," exclaimed Gabrielle hurriedly, as her eyes encountered those of a third person who now joined them.

This was the *costumier* of the theatre, an American named Ephraim Sling, who, after failing as an actor in New York, had come to England and established his claim to be one of the best theatrical dressers in the provinces. He was a thin, sallow man of about thirty, with clear cold grey eyes and

thin close-shut lips. He was always very polite in his manner, except when he indulged in the nasal drawl of his fatherland; but somehow or other Mr. Sling was no favourite amongst the company. To Percy he was always peculiarly civil; yet from the first moment he had seen him, our friend had taken a violent dislike to the American. Was it national prejudice, or is there such a thing as a warning presentiment which tells of whom to beware? Ephraim Sling now came forward with his usual quiet smile to congratulate Percy and Gabrielle on their success, and then finished by offering to escort Gabrielle to her lodgings.

"No, thank you; Mr. Percival will see me home," replied Gabrielle coldly.

"I beg pardon; I fancied I heard Mr. Percival bidding you good night as I came up. I can't leave you in better hands: you'll have a kinder Hamlet than the real Ophelia, I guess. Good night." So saying, he glided away.

Gabrielle shuddered involuntarily. "I can't endure that man," she said, "I declare I'm almost afraid of him."

"Nonsense! he's a sneaking, crawling sort of reptile, but nothing to be afraid of. Come! you are standing in the cold; let me take you home."

It must be confessed that Percy thought a great deal about Gabrielle at this time. She was very fascinating, as I have tried to tell you; especially so to a clever man, as she had none of the mildness, and timidity, and awkwardness which propriety imposes upon young ladies in the drawing-room, and could talk to a man as though she understood him and were not afraid of him. Moreover she believed in Percy; and this, let me tell you, is a great help towards the formation of a friendship or even a closer connection. To know that we are

appreciated, to feel that we are looked up to as something above the common herd, and that our opinion weighs more than that of other people, is a knowledge which is very apt to beget affection and a return in kind. Percy, too, was dazzled by his new life, and his intercourse with Gabrielle. You must remember that I have not tried to depict Percy as "a good young man." I confess I am not fond of that peculiar type of humanity. I have told you that he was weak, headstrong, undisciplined—very wicked, some people might say; but still, for all that, in my opinion a good fellow. It is not very wonderful, then, that a man of this sort should have been dazzled by the brilliance and fascination of Gabrielle.

It happened a few days after they had spoken of Ephraim Sling and his objectionable manners, that Percy and Gabrielle were walking together on the little Esplanade fronting the sea—a dreary spot just now, but which in the season was crowded with visitors whose sole occupations seemed to be bathing, eating, and lounging—all good things in their way, by the by, if not carried to excess. They had talked on all kinds of topics, most of them common enough, yet Percy could not fail to notice that Gabrielle showed an interest when he spoke, and bowed to his opinion in a manner not common among mere casual acquaintances. And it cannot be denied that our young friend liked it. Who would not, unless he had crushed out the last vestige of healthy manhood, as did some (not all) of the monks of old, or as certain feeble imitators of the monks are trying to do now?

Presently, after a short silence, Gabrielle said almost abruptly,—"You will not tell me your story, though you know that I should sympathize with you; but I will show more confidence in you: I will tell you *my* story, if you care to *listen.*"

"Do not be unjust, Gabrielle," answered Percy. "It is not because I distrust you that I do not wish to speak of my past life. There are other and weightier reasons. As for your own life, if it will give you pleasure to entrust its story to a friend whom you may trust implicitly, believe me, you will find an attentive listener."

She looked at him for a moment wistfully, as if something in his tone jarred upon her ear; then said, turning away her face as she did so,—

"I was not intended for an actress; other and better things, I fancy, were prophesied over my cradle. I might have been—God knows what I might have been! a good, peaceful, happy wife, perhaps; a respectable member of society; not as I am now, a dweller on the threshold, a Bohemian, an outer barbarian to many. My family was a good one, my parents were well off, and I was carefully educated. Perhaps they did not teach me the one thing needful; however, I must not visit upon them the fruits of my own weakness and folly.

"Percy, I loved, as we must all do at one time or other; and the man whom my foolish girl's heart taught me to think perfection was a villain. Yet he bore the Queen's commission, and was called an officer and a gentleman. Why are these names put together as though they were synonymous, I wonder? Is the man who betrays the trusting affection of a weak girl, but lately free from the guiding hands of the governess, a *gentleman?* Either the old ideas of chivalry were all wrong, or our modern notions want revising. Well, I went to Italy with my enemy—for the man I had loved became my worst and cruelest enemy—and there I had my revenge. I was not without friends in those days, and one bright morning I saw the man who had stolen my heart and

blighted my life carried into Rome a corpse. He had fallen in a duel whilst the gay world was yet asleep."

"And do you mean to say that you instigated this murder?" asked Percy.

"Ay, you call it a murder because you are a man; I call it a retribution, a judgment from Heaven," answered Gabrielle.

"I don't pretend to know much divinity," said Percy, "but I don't believe in such judgments, and it strikes me that there's a text somewhere which tells us that vengeance is not ours but God's."

"It may be so; I dare say you are right," replied Gabrielle; "at all events his death brought no balm to me. I was alone in the world, friendless very soon; for when my family cast me off, others were not long in following their example. The doors of society were shut against me; I might starve, or lead a nameless life of infamy, but what else? It is a hard thing to live, Percy, believe me. Fate, or whatever power guides the wretched and helpless, enabled me to get upon the stage, and since that time I have lived a brilliant and yet a lonely life. I have been praised and fêted and written about; yet for all that I have never made a friend, or found one who sympathized with me."

"You have found such a friend now, at all events," said Percy warmly, as Gabrielle's voice trembled and tears started to her beautiful eyes. "Our fortunes have too much in common to let me turn away from you coldly. I too might have done better things, have known a home, a woman's love, a man's honest occupation; but as it is I am an outcast. Well! we must live as we can; so away with thought, it only makes us miserable. Let us live while we live, and wait for the end."

CHAPTER XXV.

"LOOK ON THIS PICTURE, AND ON THIS."

THE unequivocal success of Percy and Gabrielle put the manager in a permanent good humour, and decided him in remaining at Stillport for some time longer. "Hamlet" was performed three times every week, and the other nights were taken up with such attractions as the company could produce, usually selected by Percy himself, for our friend knew his influence with Mr. Derry, and used it accordingly. The rest of the company regarded both the "stars" with considerable envy. Miss Rockingham, who had once been favourably noticed in a second-rate provincial paper, edited by a weak-minded attorney's clerk, and who consequently thought herself a living embodiment of Mrs. Charles Mathews, wished to know why an unknown person was to come among them and take the best things from those who deserved them from long merit; a person, too, who, judging from names and looks, was not even English. Mr. Dashwood thought, and expressed his thoughts publicly too, that Percival might be all very well, but aristocracy was one thing and acting was another, and for his part he didn't see the advantage of combining the two. Betterton Smith thought the manager's taste was getting worse than ever—and he never thought much of it—when he couldn't

distinguish between flash mannerism and real acting. Even Tony Kestrel, good-humoured, careless fellow though he was, felt rather mortified at finding himself cast so completely into the shade.

Percy, however, cared for none of these things. His salary was good, he was praised on all sides, and he was very much in the company of a beautiful and accomplished woman. Did he never think of the past, of his altered fortunes, of his lost friends, of his lost love? Of course he did, often and bitterly; but remember that a young man of two-and-twenty who is naturally light-hearted, and who is suddenly thrown into such a novel and exciting scene as that in which Percy found himself, would not be always lamenting the past. "Life is real, life is earnest," as the noble-hearted poet of America tells us; and wherever and whatever that life is, it must be lived on earnestly and really—not glided through amid mists and shadows of the Past and the Future.

There was one of Mr. Marmaduke Derry's company who regarded Percy with no feeling either of envy or dislike. Croucher the comedian, whose acting as the grave-digger in "Hamlet" had gained him no small applause, had from the first shown an interest in Percy, and had often made friendly advances to him. Hitherto Percy had taken very little notice of the comedian: his time was much occupied, and he generally managed to spend a good deal of his leisure with Gabrielle. There was something in the man's manner, however, which interested our friend. Off the stage Croucher was quiet, unobtrusive, and gentlemanly. He had none of the insolent swagger so common with popular comedians, nor on the other hand was he always in a bad temper, a by no means uncommon peculiarity of the same class. One day when Percy was

returning from a stroll in the country, where he had been learning his part in the new sensation drama which was in progress, he encountered the comedian near his lodgings.

"I have been calling on you," said Croucher. "If you are disengaged, I wish you would come with me for half-an-hour." Percy signified his willingness to do so at once, and they walked away towards the beach.

"I have long wanted to speak to you," said the comedian in his usual low quiet tone, "but I was afraid you might think me a bore. You are, however, unlike the rest of the people here; you are young and kind-hearted, you can feel for my sorrow."

Percy's first idea was that his companion wanted to borrow money, but he answered him kindly, and asked what was the matter.

"You shall see in a few minutes," replied Croucher. "I have been longing for some one to whom I might open my heart, some one to whom I might tell my secret. The people here, Derry and all of them, think I am unmarried. They would not care about me if they knew all; they'd talk of incumbrances, time taken up from study, and all that. Well, you will respect my secret, I know. I have been married five years; my poor wife has been dying for many months, sinking under consumption, and every effort of mine is scarcely enough to provide what she requires, the comforts which she must and *shall* have. It makes the work harder and the sorrow greater when I'm obliged to keep all this secret. If you can sympathize with me, as I am sure you can, you'll lighten my load not a little."

"My dear friend, I *do* feel for you most heartily," said Percy, and the warm grasp of his honest hand almost brought

the tears into the comedian's eyes. "I have often heard and read of comic actors being miserable off the stage, but yours is a case of unusual sorrow."

"Yes, my story is no fiction," said Croucher smiling sadly, "though I believe many of those tales are so. You can imagine the misery of playing night after night some broadly comic part, obliged to twist my features and alter my voice till the house roars with laughter, and all the while to see in my mind's eye the pale face of my wife and to hear her racking cough above the din of the orchestra and the laughter of the crowd. Sometimes it is almost more than I can bear."

As he spoke they stopped at a small house in a mean street, at one end of which you could catch a view of the sea. The comedian opened the door, and Percy followed him upstairs. Everything bespoke narrow means, but there were none of the ordinary companions of poverty—dirt and disorder. They entered a small low room, covered with a paper which had once been gaudy to the last degree, and which even now, in spite of age and discolouration, displayed various impossible birds of gigantic size, drinking from vases of mysterious shape, and of a kind wholly unknown to antiquaries or modern workers in the potteries. The furniture of the room was old and rickety, the table inspired one with no confidence, and the chairs were so palpably dangerous that standing was far preferable to attempting to use them. Near the window of this not over comfortable room, seated in a large arm-chair, was a young and very pretty woman. She was all the more interesting because a glance sufficed to show that disease had set its mark upon her, and had added to the charms which were soon to be blotted out for ever. The woman's gentle eyes were looking fondly at the baby which lay sleeping on

her knee, and occasionally they wandered to a second child, some two or three years old, who sat near her—a quiet peaceful-looking creature, whose large blue eyes were fixed upon its mother.

"Mary," said the comedian as he entered, "this is the gentleman of whom I have spoken—Mr. Percival, who is kind enough to feel an interest in me and mine."

The comedian's wife returned Percy's bow with an ease and grace which showed our friend that the lodger in the shabby room had nothing in common with the place except its poverty.

Tenderly as a woman did Percy take the pretty wan hand in his, and assure the wife who had known little else save sorrow during her married life, how fully he sympathized with her, and how willing he was to assist her if possible. Poor Percy was sincere in his offer, but he felt while he said it how powerless he was to help any one. Presently he spoke to the elder child, who answered him in a quiet grave tone, very unlike the prattling of such little ones generally. Percy noticed, too, that the child fixed its large calm eyes upon his face with the same look which had attracted his attention on entering the room.

"Our little Mabel does not see you," said Mabel's mother, "she has never seen the light since her birth."

Percy took the child on his knee, and will my readers think the worse of him that a tear glistened in his eye as he stroked Mabel's yellow hair, and thought of the many sorrows of the actor's family? He took his leave after a while, and Croucher accompanied him.

"I am so glad you have seen my wife," said the comedian when they were once more in the street. "I am so proud of

her that I like all who take any interest in me—and you may suppose they are not many—to know my poor gentle Mary. Do you wonder now that it is a labour to be funny on the stage with such a sad life-drama at home? Are you surprised that the shadows of my dying wife and blind child haunt me day and night?"

"I wonder only that you can succeed so well, with such a sorrow upon you," answered Percy; "but will you not tell me something of your past life? you know that I am sincere in all I say."

"My married life has been one of much sorrow and yet of great joy," said Croucher. "The pure disinterested love of my wife alone has sufficed to make me bear the many troubles which have encountered me. Mary was the only child of a solicitor, who was supposed to have a good practice and to be well off. I was his articled clerk, for I had not intended to be an actor in those days. He was a hard cruel man, and treated his daughter, who was the gentlest and most loving of women, harshly and roughly. I often witnessed these scenes, for I lived in the same house with my employer; and while my anger was justly excited against the father, I grew to love the daughter.

"Well, things got worse and worse, and as her father's temper became more violent, my poor Mary grew more sad and pale, till one day the blow came. My employer did not make his appearance at his office, and we shortly after heard that he had become involved in some extensive scheme which had failed, and that, finding himself a defaulter for very large sums, he had left England. I comforted the poor forsaken daughter as best I could, and soon after married her. We lived at first happily enough, for I had a little money of my

own. But troubles came thick upon us; my wife fell ill, the terrible disease which is killing her showed itself, and my narrow means became too slight to support her. I managed, after many failures, to get an engagement on the stage; and from playing policemen or country farmers in small farces, I have risen to my present place. I hope I haven't tired you; but I like you to know my story. Now good-bye; I must go to rehearsal."

So they parted, and the comedian that night appeared more than usually comic, and the house applauded him to the echo, whilst the officers present declared him "a doosid funny fellow, and no mistake." And yet Croucher the comedian heard his dying wife's cough above all the noise and laughter.

You will not see any more of these people. It is not my purpose to tell you of the *res angusta domi* which pressed upon the actor, all the more when his pretty wife was gone: I have only told his story to show among what kind of people Percy Cheyne had come.

Some few days after Percy had visited the comedian's house, and immediately before the production of the great sensational drama which had been announced to suit the taste of Stillport, following the depraved example of the London populace, our friend found himself one evening sitting alone in the green-room with Gabrielle. Percy had acted well, as he always did; but the novelty was wearing off, the excitement which had attended his first efforts was over, and he found himself sinking into a professional player, and already weary of it. As he sat now in his theatrical finery, his head resting on his hands, and his face betraying his discontented frame of mind, he felt a gentle touch upon his shoulder, and, looking up, his eyes met

those of Gabrielle fixed upon him with a look of tender interest.

"You are unhappy," she said.

"No, Gabrielle: only weary and discontented," he answered.

"You know that I am sorry—that I sympathize?"

"Yes, I know it, Gabrielle."

There was a pause of some moments; then, sitting near him, and allowing the full splendour of her eyes to flash upon him, she said, in the words of Byron's Sultana,—

"'Christian, canst thou love?'"

Percy started slightly, but answered almost directly, "I can, and have loved."

"Percy," said Gabrielle, "why do you cherish this thing of the past? you know it is over, irrevocably ended. You are too young, too good, too impulsive to nurse this dead love for ever. You have changed all that; you have chosen a new life, new objects, new pursuits: do not look back mournfully into the past. You are so cold that I must needs forget my pride and speak what I feel. We are alone in the world, friendless, uncared-for, forsaken: we may help each other to fight the fight, and surmount the difficulties of the way. Percy, can you not love me?"

As she spoke, her warm brown eyes were brimming over with tenderness, and her little well-shaped hand rested half timidly, half trustingly, on Percy's knee. It was a trying position for any young man, especially for one so warm-hearted and impulsive as Percy Cheyne. How many men, do you suppose, would have looked down into those lovely eyes, and listened to that soft musical voice, and not yielded to the spell of the siren? Percy, however, was as inflexible as St. Bernard of Clairvaux could have been, though he did not

think it necessary to follow Bernard's example, and plunge into cold water as a penance for having looked too long at a fair lady's eyes. Had not Percy worn proof armour of a special kind I will not say what the result might have been. As it was, he took Gabrielle's hand in his, and said calmly, almost coldly:

"No, Gabrielle! it cannot be. I thank you most heartily for showing interest in one who, as you truly say, is outcast and forsaken; but what you ask cannot be."

A bright blaze of passion flushed her face, as starting up she said,—

"I see how it is. You think that such as I am cannot be pure and earnest in our love. You share in the vulgar prejudice which classes actresses and the most abandoned women together. You do not believe that a woman who has stood behind the footlights can be as spotless in her character, as honest and disinterested in her love, as tender and faithful as a wife, as any drawing-room miss who lisps nonsense in society. You do not believe that an actress can be pure. You do not——"

"Stay, Gabrielle! you wrong me, indeed you do," interposed Percy. "I believe fully in the purity of your nature, nor am I one of the prejudiced people you speak of. I only tell you that I have loved once and for ever; and though my love is hopeless, yet it must never be forgotten."

"And what is it that you love? Some fair-haired doll, some pet of a country ball-room, with one idea, one quality, and that amiability. But forgive me," she added hastily, as she saw the angry spot which burned on Percy's cheek, "I was wrong, I was mad. It is over now. Say you forgive me!"

The beautiful eyes were swimming in tears now, and our friend Percy was no Stoic, as you know; so the forgiveness

was soon granted, and they sat side by side for a few minutes in silence. Presently Gabrielle said,—

"Since I may not talk to you of love, I may at least ask your protection. Do you know that I am pestered by a member of this company, whom I detest, and who has actually presumed to make proposals to me?"

"Who on earth can it be?" said Percy, "though I'm not surprised, Gabrielle."

"It is that odious American, Ephraim Sling. He has dared to come after me, with his slow drawling talk, and his cunning treacherous eyes, and to talk to me about the money he has saved, and to offer marriage to *me!* O Percy! protect me from that man. I fear him almost as much as I dislike him. I don't know why, but I feel helpless in his presence."

"Confound his impudence! What does he mean by it?" exclaimed Percy, who, considering his late coldness, was marvellously passionate now. "If I catch him annoying you, Gabrielle, depend upon it I'll teach him to keep his place and know his position better."

It was a foolish speech, and quite unnecessary; but it was provoked by the notion that such a fellow as Ephraim Sling should approach in any other character than one of the humblest respect such a being as Gabrielle. Perhaps had Percy and Gabrielle seen the expression on the American's face, as he turned away from the partially closed door after hearing their conversation, they might not have felt quite so comfortable as they did when they quitted the theatre that night.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A CATASTROPHE.

THE interview with Gabrielle in which she had "told her love" dwelt long in Percy's memory. You who are case-hardened and begrimed with the world's dust, who believe that the age of chivalry is really dead, you may smile at the actress's avowal, and think how foolish Percy was to dwell upon it. But it was a true love story, for all that cynics may think or say, and Percy was touched, though not in love; for, trust me, it is sufficiently hard to feel impassive when we know that a woman loves us, more especially if that woman be young and beautiful, and our years be but two-and-twenty. Once or twice the thought arose in Percy's mind—why should not he marry Gabrielle? His former life, his former position were gone for ever. But then the gentle blooming face of Maude Romaine was before his "mind's eye;" her sweet lips, from which his own had drawn such nectar, seemed to whisper, "I love you," and her presence seemed to hover round him like a guardian angel from a higher and better sphere, contrasting with the mean and squalid scenes in which Percy now lived.

No: come what might, Percy had "lived and loved;" and henceforth his path must be uncheered by tender thoughts

except for her whom he never hoped to see again. Perhaps Percy loved Maude all the more devotedly because, before he had seen her, his motto had been,—

> "My only books were woman's looks,
> And folly all they taught me."

At least now he was strong enough in the midst of great temptations to be faithful to what was for him only a shadow, "the shadow of a shade."

At length, after much expectation and much advertising, the highly sensational drama of "The Man in Grey; or, the Phantom of Fairlight Farm," was produced. Now Percy hated sensational plays, as every sensible person does, and was very unwilling to play in it. But Mr. Derry had remarked with great feeling, "We depend entirely upon you, Percival, for the dialogues. Mortimer and the other fellows can do the situations, but you can talk, and so without you we're nothing, as one might say."

On the afternoon preceding the production of the piece, the stage of the Stillport theatre was deserted except by two persons, one of whom was a carpenter who was giving the final touches to some of the stage machinery, the other was Ephraim Sling the *costumier*.

"What's this concern for?" enquired Mr. Sling, pointing to a pasteboard mountain raised to a considerable height above the stage.

"Oh, that's the mountain where the young man goes to visit his sweetheart when he sees the ghost—the grey man, you know."

"Ah yes, I remember. Percival plays the lover, I think?"

"Yes, to be sure, and very well he does it, so I'm told."

"How soon does he go on the mountain?" enquired Mr. Sling.

"I don't know," said the carpenter, getting tired of so many questions. "In the first scene, I think: everybody goes on it one time or another." So saying, he shuffled off with his tools.

What could Ephraim Sling have wanted, that he lingered on that stifling little stage when he might have been enjoying the sea breezes, or pleasant company? His conduct was decidedly mysterious. He first examined the mimic mountain with great care, seemed to calculate mentally the height from the top of the pasteboard elevation to the stage, and then proceeded to look critically at the wooden props which supported it. Presently he retired to the carpenter's shop, and returning with a saw which he used with the hand of an expert, he cut carefully through both the wooden supports of the mountain. The expression on the American's sallow face was ill to look upon as he proceeded swiftly in his work.

"Now," he muttered, when it was done, "Mr. Percival, look to yourself,—ay, and Gabrielle too, for that matter. I guess you're pretty well circumvented." Muttering in this manner to himself, he left the theatre.

Well wrote the genial poet and philosopher, Horace,—

> "Prudens futuri temporis exitum
> Caliginosa nocte premit deus,
> Ridetque, si mortalis ultra
> Fas trepidat."

It is, indeed, far better for us that the future is hidden in the

thickest clouds and darkness, else how should we who are so timorous and discontented over the things which we know, be able to live at all with the terrors of the "coming events" openly displayed to our trembling eyes? Perhaps never poet wrote truer lines than those so often quoted, where Gray tells us that—

"Where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise."

And ignorance of evil always is bliss to us tremblers in the valley of shadows.

There was no suspicion of evil, however, no thought of anything save pleasure, among the crowd who thronged the doors of the Stillport theatre on the first night of the sensation drama, and filled with delight the heart of Mrs. Derry as she sat as money-taker at the pit entrance. The English people like excitement, no matter of what kind, so long as it is new and really thrilling. A man walking blindfold on a rope will draw them in crowds, so long as they believe there is any danger; but once explain to them that the man is almost as safe as in his own arm-chair, and the thing is a failure. We are wonderfully like the old Athenians, caring for nothing but to hear or tell or see something new.

A crowded house was disclosed to the managerial eye as the curtain rose, and Mr. Derry stood anxiously at the wing to inspect the audience. The last note of the orchestra was silent; the stolid musicians, who always look so bored with the play, and keep their eyes steadfastly turned away from the stage, were turning over their music and shaking their brass instruments; the first scene of the sensation drama had begun, and Tony Kestrel was delivering some platitudes very

impressively to Mr. Betterton Smith, who did not seem to pay much attention to them—a neglect for which, considering their merit, no one could blame him. In the second scene the audience were cheered with a view of the haunted farm-house, at one window of which Gabrielle was visible, looking out for her lover, and uttering the usual "Soft, he comes! Alas! why lingers he?" which no one out of a play ever yet said or ever will. Presently Gabrielle appeared at the door of the farm-house, and suddenly beholding the form of the dilatory lover in the distance, hurried to the mountain to obtain a better view. The audience sat spell-bound as the beautiful actress bounded lightly up the concealed ladder and reached the top of the mountain; when at the very moment that her feet touched the summit the whole mass trembled, leaned over for an instant, then fell, precipitating the unfortunate Gabrielle with great violence on the stage. There was a cry of consternation from the audience, the manager and all the actors hurried upon the stage, and at the same moment a cry of "Fire!" was raised. Gabrielle's dress had in falling struck against a lamp, and her clothes were in flames.

A terrible scene of confusion followed. An alarm of fire in a small theatre, from which escape is very difficult, is doubly formidable, and the mass of the people who thought only of themselves were plunging wildly towards the narrow doors. Meantime Percy Cheyne, who had rushed on to the stage among the first, caught up the helpless actress in his arms and carried her off to the green-room, where he covered her with all the clothes he could find, and at length succeeded in extinguishing the flames. What a change was there from the blooming, bright-eyed, happy girl who a few minutes before

had gone forth as she thought to win applause and gain success! Now a pale, scorched, moaning figure was all that remained of the lovely Gabrielle. The curtain had been hastily dropped; and when Mr. Derry, in a state of great agitation, came before the footlights to address the house, he found nothing but empty benches, and a small crowd hastening out of the doors. The hastily summoned surgeon, when he had examined Gabrielle, did *not* shake his head as doctors are always supposed to do, but simply declared her injuries to be very severe, and recommended her instant removal to her lodgings. Perhaps there was no one in the company who was not sincerely sorry for Gabrielle's accident, although envy was rife against her; but to Percy, who had been her constant companion, the sorrow was of a deeper and keener sort. He never suspected the treachery which had caused the misfortune, otherwise there would have been other feelings to mingle with his sorrow; he only knew now, as he assisted to convey the shattered form of Gabrielle to her room, that he had felt more for her than he could have believed.

On the following morning, Percy received a summons to the actress's bedside. He found her attended by two doctors and a nurse, looking, as she lay supported by pillows, still beautiful, though the seal of the destroyer was upon her brow. The others retired to another part of the room, as Gabrielle laid her hand on Percy's, and said, in a faint voice which had lost none of its sweetness,—

"Percy, I could not bear to go without seeing you once more. You are my only friend in the world. I know that you do not care much for me—that is, not *very* much; but you will not think less kindly of me when I am gone when you remember how fondly I loved you? Our days together

have been very brief, but very happy. Do not forget me, do not forget every trace of your poor Gabrielle. You will, I trust, yet be happy, and find all that you have lost. For me, shall I find more than I have lost? God is good, and will pardon. I cannot speak any more. Percy, say good-bye now; a long, long good-bye to Gabrielle: keep this for my sake."

She placed a little locket in his hand, and sank back exhausted with the effort of speaking. The attendants came forward, and in a few moments the doctor who had held her hand said softly,—

"Poor girl! her troubles are over."

Percy pressed his lips once to the fair forehead, and turned from the room. And many a time afterwards, in far different scenes, his eyes grew dim with tears as he looked at the locket and the curl of brown hair which it enclosed, the dying gift of Gabrielle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

RELICS.

You may imagine that the home at Inglefell was not very cheerful now. Maude had got over the first and most bitter pain of her sorrow, but she had settled down into a sort of resigned quiet melancholy, which is perhaps the most dangerous form that sorrow can assume. She was no longer the bright household angel, filling the little cottage with her merry laugh and her cheery songs, but a pale, subdued, grave little creature, with a far-away look in her great sad eyes that spoke too plainly to the loving eyes of her mother, and made Paul anxious and troubled, though it was not to be supposed that he could see as much as Mrs. Romaine. Maude had taken to illuminating lately—a resource very common among girls who have lost a closer and more tender object of interest. Every woman is a fanatic at heart, and when the hope of possessing—

> "A nearer one
> Still and a dearer one
> Yet than all other,"

is taken away, the poor desolate heart yearns for some employment, and finds nowhere such congenial work as in the

Church. How many saints have become so because their chance of earthly happiness has been blighted! Half the young ladies who put on black robes and become Sisters of Mercy would have been "joyful mothers of children" by this time, and have never laid aside the becoming trappings of everyday life, but for some untoward accident, some broken vow or lost love, believe me. So, as there were no schools accessible, and no High-Church curates to evangelize the neighbourhood, little Maude comforted her sad heart with illuminating texts of Scripture in crimson and gold, and all the colours of the rainbow, and inventing curious devices which might have puzzled the keenest intellects to decipher. She never complained—commend me to a woman for bearing her martyrdom bravely; it may be "in silence and tears," but always bravely. Percy's name was never mentioned in the household. Paul had expected to hear from him, but no letter ever came. The fact being that Percy was ashamed to describe his life at Stillport, and was in such an abnormal state of excitement and alternation of spirits—now utterly miserable, now in a whirl of pleasure—that he could not school himself to write calmly to Maude's brother. Paul, for his own part, made up his mind that Percy had come emphatically to grief, as he had for a long time expected he would; and though he had been very fond of him, and would have been now quite ready to assist him, yet he felt persuaded that Percy was no fit companion for his sister, and her sorrow for his loss rather annoyed Paul on the whole. You see, Percy was in trouble, an outcast; and how can we feel the same toward our friends under such circumstances? Society does not expect it: perhaps it is asking too much of human nature.

Paul, too, had very different views in his head for Maude's welfare. Mr. Tom Benson, whom you will remember as the good-natured fellow who had made shipwreck of his heart in the matter of Maude, had lately succeeded by his father's death to the sole management of the County Bank at Grey Abbots, and was one of the richest men in the town. Paul and Benson frequently met, and it was easy to see that the latter's feelings remained unchanged; and though he was contented to worship at a distance, he still loved Maude Romaine with the honest fervour of a simple manly nature. Paul saw this, and rejoiced at it, and left no means untried to bring Benson and Maude together. He knew that in their straitened circumstances such a marriage was the very best thing that could happen; and although Paul was the last man to plan a mercenary union, and sell his sister's happiness for gold, yet in this case, as there were honest love and a good fellow into the bargain, he saw no objection which could be urged, except—and this was rather important—that at present Maude was entirely absorbed in her own sad thoughts and her illuminations, and received poor Tom Benson's little attentions very kindly, but very coldly too.

Often at night after they had separated, and Paul and his mother had fancied that the shadow was leaving Maude's face, and the memory of her sorrow gradually fading, the poor little girl would creep upstairs to her own room, and sit by the open window, and hold Percy's likeness and look at it till she could not see it for her tears. The photograph was for a wonder a good likeness, and she could see the bold honest face, the bright, merry, truthful eyes, the kindly, handsome, weak mouth, almost as in life. It was the uncertainty of his fate which made her so miserable; if she could only know

where he was, what he was doing, if he were unhappy, then at least she fancied there would be some bond of union between them. Why had he not written? surely he might have written to Paul, or even to her—she could have forgiven that! And then she would take out carefully from her desk a ring, a gold and sapphire trifle which he had given her on the morning of his departure; and, as she placed it for a moment on her finger, and thought of the time when *he* had put it there, and of the changes which had come since, our little Maude was very very miserable indeed. This may seem rather weak and foolish to the ironclad philosophers of whom I have spoken once or twice; but I repeat here, that it is not for such that this book is written, nor do I expect to find favour in their eyes. Those who sympathize with me or with my words must, like Guinevere's lovers, "have a touch of earth." Remember that little Maude was almost a child, and that she had been rudely awakened from the glamour of "Love's young dream." Perhaps all these feelings pass away when, as Thackeray says, "we come to forty year." I cannot tell yet; but I hope not.

It was nearly time for Paul to go back to Oxford; the first sorrow for Frank Challoner's death had yielded to that most perfect of healers—Time, and Paul now felt only that there was a void in his Oxford life—one not likely to be filled up. The Challoners had gone abroad for some months, and Edith's letters had been few and far between. She spoke of her grief, which prevented her from writing frequently, and of the close watch which her stepmother kept over her, as though she suspected her secret, which she certainly did. Paul was not at all satisfied with such intelligence: he could not write often, as Mr. Challoner moved his family about quickly from

place to place, as though he were "seeking rest and finding none;" and so on the whole matters were in a very unsatisfactory condition. Just at this time Paul received a letter from a man at St. Chrys'tom's who, after describing many of his adventures during the Long Vacation, finished up by saying,—

"I came across a friend of yours, too, in a most romantic manner. My people had been staying at Stillport in the early part of the summer—a wretchedly slow hole—and I went down to them for a day or two; and to my intense astonishment the first person I met almost was Cheyne of St. Chrys'tom's. You knew him very well, I think—one of the Phlegethon Club lot. Well, it seems he's gone on the stage, and has been playing at Stillport for some time, and there are all sorts of stories about him. He's a regular Lovelace in buskins, and has been playing the deuce with the actresses. They say that one of them, an awfully pretty girl, was very spoony on our friend, and he behaved like a cad to her, and she killed herself, or something of the sort. I know that it made a great noise in the place. But then anything *would* make a noise in Stillport."

Paul read this aloud without considering the consequences. Had he observed the deadly paleness which came over Maude's face, he would scarcely have read to the end.

"Well," he exclaimed, laying down the letter, "this is more than I expected. I had no idea the man would turn out such a blackguard." He looked up and met Maude's eyes looking at him indignantly, scornfully.

"And you *believe* this story?" she said at last, controlling her voice by a strong effort. "You really believe this miserable scandal?"

"Why, Maudie, how can I help believing it?" said Paul. "Douglas here saw him, and these stories could not have got about without some foundation for them, even if they are exaggerated. It seems clear that Cheyne has been leading a wild reckless kind of life: his going on the stage alone doesn't argue very much for his steadiness. Poor fellow! he was just the man to get into a mess of this sort—reckless, and utterly careless of consequences."

"Hush, Paul! do not say any more," interposed Mrs. Romaine sadly; but Maude rose and left the room, wondering in her innocent heart how Paul could be so cruel and unjust, and wondering too, with a sort of horror at the thought, if this dreadful story could indeed be true.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCERNING OXFORD DOINGS.

It is a very pleasant thing to find yourself in Oxford again after the Long. Of course you have enjoyed yourself immensely during that festive period, especially if the ensuing winter term does not entail the terrible ordeal of the Schools, those torture-rooms over whose portal the rather well-known inscription of "All hope abandon ye who enter here" might be as truly written as it was over the other torture-chamber down below. For the first night or two of the October term, perhaps, when one is sitting over one's solitary pipe and one's solitary glass of grog, reading the stiff page of Aristotle or the perspicuous tome of Sir W. Blackstone, some regrets may arise, some sighing for "the touch" of a certain "vanished hand," or "the sound" of a certain "voice" which (as far as we are concerned) "is still;" but this soon passes off. Oxford is a wonderful place for forgetting one's troubles in: one might almost suppose that Lethe forms a junction somewhere with the Isis; for I verily believe that had sad Ariadne been placed on the bank by Saunders's Bridge or Iffley Lock, she would have dried her eyes and forgotten all about Theseus in five minutes.

Paul Romaine had few pleasant days to mourn for, when he

found himself again within the old walls of St. Chrys'tom's. The absence of Edith Challoner, and still more her few and constrained letters, the sorrow of Maude, and the death of his best friend, added to the loss of another, all combined to make Paul (who, as you know, was not given to look on the brightest side of things) sufficiently gloomy and miserable. However, Oxford and its peculiar style of life had to a great degree the same Lethean effect on him which it exercises on other people; and if Paul did not forget his troubles, he soon ceased to think much about them, in the excitement of work and relaxation. He was no longer the unknown, retiring man he had been. A man who has pulled bow in the 'Varsity Eight is a marked character, and though it was soon known that Paul would not row again, yet he had plenty of acquaintances among the boating men. I have said that St. Chrys'tom's was not an intellectual college. Its sole strength lay in its thews and muscles: beyond the somewhat narrow circle of boating, cricketing, and "grinds," there was scarcely one man in ten who could sustain a conversation. At every table in Hall you heard the same stale talk night after night: whether Brown was to remain stroke of the Torpid, how much Tomkins had improved in his 'coxing,' what a swell Lowder was in the boat, and out of it too, with a groom in livery to escort him to the grinds and cricket. Then you would hear the captain of the boat, if you were unfortunate enough to sit at his table, talking in a low and mysterious tone about the "form" in which "four" rowed; or raising his voice in wrath when he saw "bow" audaciously eat apple-tart under his very nose, training having begun a week before; or sternly refusing the entreaty of two freshmen, who had sent up a note to ask if they might eat just *one* pancake. Boating, mark you, is a very

fine thing in its way, but as a staple of conversation *toujours boating*, like *toujours perdrix*, is apt to become wearisome. If any one were rash enough at St. Chrys'tom's to talk of any topic a little removed from the everlasting subject of athletics, he was either stared at blankly by men who did not understand him, or "sconced" for talking "shop." Most of these men were very good fellows, but out of a boat or a cricket-field they were simply bores; and any one listening to them or looking at their manners in Hall would have enquired if this were the Oxford politeness which is vaunted—and on the whole I think justly—all over the world. Paul Romaine, in that he was muscular and could row, had much in common with this the largest set of men in St. Chrys'tom's; but in that he was also intellectual, and had lately so far forgotten what he owed to the character of his college as to write an article or two in a magazine, and to send a poem to "College Rhymes," he occupied a kind of nondescript position, and most of the men looked at him askance as one with whom they could not get on very well.

When the men at Paul's table in Hall were not talking about the boat (which was very seldom), the great wits of the company used to employ themselves in retailing the doings of a certain freshman named John Boring, who had contrived to make himself the talk of the whole college. It is true that he was also the butt of the same body; but he either did not know this or chose to ignore it. He was well known; and some men prefer being celebrated and laughed at as fools to remaining unknown and uncared-for as wise men. In appearance Mr. John Boring was sufficiently ludicrous. He was of middle height, with a face which was always crimson, as though fresh from the friction of the very hardest and

roughest of towels; he had small staring eyes, deeply furrowed underneath by the constant pressure of an eye-glass, through which he glared with an air of mingled ferocity and self-satisfaction upon the passer-by. He affected dress of the most *outré* and varied style, and, though a freshman, set himself up for a model to St. Chrys'tom's, and I dare say, if the truth were known, to the University in general. He was not a very stupid man, but so overloaded with conceit that he provoked the ridicule of every one who was not a greater fool than himself. Omniscience was his foible, as has been said of a very different man. There was nothing that he did not profess to be able to do. The stock joke in the college at this time was to ask Boring to a wine and then to "draw" him. If you spoke of hunting or shooting, he would remark, with his insufferable drawl:—"Aw, I had some rather special shooting at my place in Scotland last autumn." "My place in Scotland" being, in the general opinion of his hearers, if not a *castle in Spain*, decidedly a *box in Airshire*. No tennis match could be got up, but John Boring's name appeared in it; no scratch billiards were without his countenance and eye-glass. He always played badly, and was always beaten; yet to hear him talk you would have supposed him the champion billiard, tennis, and whist player of Oxford. He was a Mason, a Rifle Volunteer (in which character he was remarkable for seldom hitting the target, but very frequently endangering the lives of his fellow-creatures), he smoked furiously (though it generally made him sick), and talked of going in for a class. Mr. Boring, too, was fond of boasting of his pedigree, and talked of "Aw, my uncle, Sir Benjamin Boring, you know," till some one invented a crest for him, representing *a mole*, with the motto "*I bore*," which

silenced him for a time. He was an inveterate toady of the senior men, and it was almost impossible to keep him out of one's room, a hint being about as useless as the tickling of an elephant's hide with a straw.

Paul Romaine disliked this man cordially. He met him frequently, for it was impossible to go anywhere without falling in with the inevitable Boring. On one or two occasions he had been rather impertinent to Paul, who treated him pretty much as a Newfoundland dog treats a tiresome little terrier who annoys him; but the fellow's conceit was so obtrusively offensive that Paul had as much as he could do to keep his temper on one or two occasions.

One night Paul was at a large wine, where most of the men were in that condition which is technically described as "screwed," and Mr. Boring, although by no means so far gone as several of the party, was grossly insolent to people in general, and to Paul in particular. He was indulging in a series of highly offensive remarks, when our friend, who was perfectly sober (for indeed drinking was not one of his weaknesses), suddenly got up and very quietly demanded an apology for what Boring had said. That worthy declined in the most emphatic and objectionable language; when he suddenly found himself with his head under the grate, and his person generally surrounded by the fender and fire-irons. Boring sprang up and at Paul, burning with rage and his late close acquaintance with the fire, but a second blow sent him sprawling, and this time into another element, as he pitched into a tub of cold water which had been used to cool the wine; and so much was he discomposed by this last discomfiture that he slunk away in silence, and never after was impertinent to Paul. This incident soon got the name over

the college of "the Extinguishing of Boring," and became a sort of new *Heyira*, from which men dated events.

Perhaps you wonder why I have dwelt so long on so worthless an object as John Boring; but in sketching characters as they pass across the stage, I must now and then come upon a type of man which is unpleasant. We cannot all be perfect, you know.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHICH IS CHIEFLY ECCLESIASTICAL.

THERE are few more unsatisfactory things than a Sunday in Oxford. Take it which way you will, it is an essentially slow day. Let not the armies of the pious take up their arms and array themselves against me when they read this sentence. It is not the Sunday *as* Sunday that I deplore, but its character at Oxford. It is a day without any resources. On other days you have your work and "healthful play," but on Sunday you have not got these, and you have nothing to supply their place.

Take one way of spending Sunday. You get up to morning chapel at eight, we will say (you *don't* always, but we will suppose it); you breakfast, and go to the University sermon. You sit in a gallery among a crowd of men, you see a procession of Doctors enter in their robes, you see the Vice-Chancellor marshalled by his mace-bearers or "pokers," and the Proctors; and then you hear the "bidding prayer" from the preacher, followed by his sermon, of a length varying from three quarters of an hour to an hour. Perhaps twice a term some well-known preacher delivers the sermon, and on the other Sundays Reverend nobodies deliver discourses which

may be improving, but if so, the working of them must be very subtle and secret. The sermon over, you are left at half-past eleven to your own resources. Walking is a great feature on Sundays: it is not a favourite exercise at Oxford, although the best; but on Sunday men walk who never walked before, and think it their bounden duty to take "a grind" to Kidlington or Woodstock, to Nuneham or Abingdon, as their taste leads them. Then there come evening chapel and Hall, and the night is spent at wines—for Sunday night is a great time for these meetings.

Now is this a satisfactory sort of Sunday? I do not put the question to the professedly pious, but to people in general.

Some even—a great many men, in fact—do not go to the University sermon at all, but go to parish churches instead. And what do they get for their moral delectation? The service is better performed than in the majority of college chapels, perhaps; but you have heard the service once already: you go for the sermon. And the sermon! Will my readers believe me when I tell them that in Oxford, the far-famed and the learned, the hot-bed in which are raised the budding divines who ornament our Church, the preaching is decidedly worse than we generally find in village churches? Yet it is so, with some very few exceptions. If you visit the Oxford churches on Sunday morning you will arrive at the conclusion that a greater forest of dry sticks will not be found in any other pulpits in England. A man once showed me one of Newman's sermons, which he had heard preached twice on the same Sunday at different churches in Oxford.

There are men, again, at Oxford, who never go to church, either to the University sermon or any other sermon; but of these I do not intend to speak. I expect that Sunday is to

them a more unsatisfactory day than to any one. They must get sick of smoking all day at their windows, and gambling between whiles. Since the Union has been opened on Sunday afternoons, a refuge is given from the boredom of an ill-spent day; and the eagerness with which men rush to the newspapers, novels, and magazines, shows plainly enough how "weary, flat, stale and unprofitable" men find the pursuits of God's day.

What is the remedy for this? I do not pretend to know. I am not of the stuff from which they make reformers; but better men than I am have taken the question up, and are discussing it now. Perhaps if college chapel services were a little less formal, and University sermons something more than mere dogmatic essays, some improvement might arise.

No man felt more dissatisfied with Sunday in Oxford than Paul Romaine. Perhaps it was his misfortune that he thought more about things than his fellows. They were contented to take things as they found them, and never to trouble their honest stupid heads about the matter; but Paul could not do this; and although not a deeply-feeling religious man, he was sufficiently religious to feel disgusted with himself and Oxford generally, when a discordant jangle of bells reminded him that another Sunday was about to be celebrated by the most church-going and least devotional city in England.

There was yet another side to Oxford religious life with which Paul became acquainted at this time. This is not an age of fierce controversialism, as it was when the "Tracts for the Times" were making unto themselves a name, and when young men were crowding into the Church, and taking the Holy Establishment by storm. This is an age the very reverse of fanatic: a loose age—loose in its opinions, loose in its views

and judgments, loose and superficial in its knowledge, essentially loose in its writing. Yet there is fanaticism to be found even now, and Paul Romaine found it at Oxford. One evening he was sitting alone in his rooms reading, when there entered a young man with a pale face, high cheek-bones, and solemn blue eyes, which, however, in spite of their solemnity, had something of a humorous twinkle in them. This was Brother Ambrose, known in the flesh as Charlie Wylder, who having been as fast a man as any in St. Chrys'tom's, or all Oxford to boot, suddenly had "a call," or fancied he had, to join the Brotherhood of S. Gengulphus, a secret society of ultra-High-Churchmen, of whom some strange stories were told. It was said that they kept a moderator lamp with a pink glass shade burning perpetually at their head-quarters, somewhere in St. Clement's. They were supposed to have originated some totally new ideas on the subject of the Catholic Faith (I dare say they had), and to have almost rivalled a certain hero who boasted that he had invented a new gin and a new religion. It was matter of fact that Brother Ambrose, formerly C. Wylder, had an oratory in his "scout's hole," and greatly inconvenienced his servant by displacing his cups and saucers to make room for a packing-case covered with red baize, and dignified by the name of an altar. It was likewise well known that a midnight procession of the Brotherhood had been seen performing mystic evolutions round the grassplot in St. Chrys'tom's, and had been "cautioned" by the Dean, who had evangelical proclivities, and who was, I believe, solemnly excommunicated from the flock of the faithful by the Arch-Presbyter of the Brotherhood.

The members of the fraternity meant well, I dare say; but like all bigots they were narrow-minded, and like all narrow-

minded people they were not to be trusted. Perhaps it was better for them to fast on Fridays, to wear crosses and surplices, and to buy candles, than to get drunk, and swear, and gamble, and so forth; but I question whether the sinners did not make better men eventually than the saints. The chief proselytes of the Brotherhood of S. Gengulphus were made from among the freshmen; upon them the missionaries of the Brotherhood plied their arts vigorously, though not very successfully. They never made a greater mistake than in asking Paul to become one of them.

"No, Wylder, or Brother Ambrose, or whatever you call yourself," said Paul, after listening to the Brother's speech, "I can worship God without belonging to a brotherhood smaller than that of mankind, and I don't fancy my prayers will be any the worse because I don't chant them, or wear a cross round my neck. Take my advice: cut your surplices and candles, fast less and walk more; pray when you do pray, but don't be always at it, and you'll serve God a great deal better than by making fools of yourselves as you're doing now."

I'm afraid the Brotherhood excommunicated Paul after this.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS IS SPIRITUAL.

HITHERTO I have traced the events of this history with tolerable chronological accuracy; but I shall, for potent reasons, do so no longer. It would be dull work to record term by term the fortunes of Paul Romaine at Oxford; so henceforth I, like Mr. Young in his "Night Thoughts," shall "take no note of time save by its loss." Remember, I am not trying to develope any one character here with Præ-Raphaelite accuracy: I am only sketching outlines of some few lives at Oxford, where a man's life is only an outline: the background and some striking touches of the foreground have yet to be filled in. Hence most of my characters must "come like shadows, so depart:" we must be content to gaze on them for a moment and then dismiss them to the world.

Paul was all this time reading steadily for his class in "Greats:" not living like a hermit—men who are *always* reading seldom figure well in the Class-list—but still devoting the major portion of his time to Aristotle and Plato, Thucydides and Tacitus, with Dugald Stewart and Mill as light adjuncts. Some writers on Oxford life have described their heroes as reading Pindar with knotted cords round their foreheads. I do not speak of such doings, because I

never heard of any one taking in Pindar for examination, or of any one being foolish enough to cut his forehead with a cord, under the impression that it improved his intellectual faculties. Paul did not, I have said, live as a hermit: he acted on the good old principle of working when he *did* work, and playing when he played. Occasionally our friend betook himself to some of those entertainments which are given two or three times a term in Oxford, when the Town Hall or the Corn Exchange echoes to the sonorous melodies of "the inimitable Mackney," "the great Vance," or "the well-known Arthur Lloyd," and is occasionally made still more attractive when the stars of the Opera come, and Titiens and Sinico, Bossi and Gardoni delight a crowded and highly appreciative audience.

It chanced that a certain well-known Medium and Spirit-rapper announced his advent by parti-coloured posters all over Oxford: he was no other than the celebrated Professor Chiseler whom you have heard of as adorning one of Mrs. Chunter's *réunions* in Sloane Street. Professor Chiseler was accompanied by the Brothers Sallyport, "and others," as the advertisements rather vaguely announced. On the first night of their performance the Town Hall was full, the majority of the audience being as usual University men. These young fellows smoked and chaffed, laughed and joked, as is their wont, till the Professor came forward, and made a very dry and rambling speech, which was listened to with great dissatisfaction; first because it was dry and rambling, next because it trenched rather too familiarly upon subjects which even an Oxford undergraduate, though by no means a precisian, is not prepared to listen to quietly. This, however, passed off pretty well; but when in the course of the evening the gas was lowered, and the spiri-

tualists proceeded to give a "dark *séance*," in which fiddles and other musical instruments performed aerial flights without any apparent agency, and announced that the wonder was entirely owing to the spirits, the meeting grew uproarious. One or two men, after having been knocked rather roughly about the head by a truculent violin, moved (of course) by spiritual agency, discovered certain wires in connection with the said violin, and announced the discovery rather audibly. A general shout was raised, and a Christ Church man, clad in the traditional garments of that college—namely, a bright brown coat, greenish trousers, a vivid waistcoat, and a stupendous tie—suggested in stentorian accents the advisability of storming the stage. The cry was promptly responded to, several members of "the House" (as Christ Church men love to style themselves), not altogether innocent of the wines of Xeres and Oporto, charged with a shout, a number of other men followed, and the platform was taken by storm in one instant. Lynch Law was the order of the evening: they decided that the performers were humbugs and imposters, which they undoubtedly were; and as they had fled at the first alarm, the victors proceeded to smash up the apparatus and conjuring paraphernalia with loud shouts of triumph. Two very useless policemen (and a more helpless creature than your Oxford policeman does not exist) tried to quell the disturbance. One, being good-tempered as well as imbecile, was chaffed into silence by a voluble Brasenose man; but the other, waxing troublesome, was promptly bonneted and overthrown by a gigantic Exeter man who had already distinguished himself in the work of demolition.

The row was at its highest, "the fun grew fast and furious," and Paul had just knocked over the manager, who came back

frantic with rage to defend his property, when there arose a cry of "the Proctors! look out for the Proctors!" Warned by the noise which reached the street, or summoned by some foe, the Junior Proctor, attended by his marshal and six bull-dogs, was in the room. Oxford men never run from a Proctor; so the iconoclasts of the platform came down quietly to their seats, and were taken in detail by the Reverend Mr. Blower, the Proctor, a little fat fussy man in spectacles, who looked in his large velvet-sleeved gown as though some one had thrown a blanket over him and extinguished him. Our friend Paul fortunately escaped the Proctor's short-sighted justice, and got back to college unquestioned. Professor Chiseler withdrew his bills and himself the next morning, and the entertainment was not repeated

Although Paul Romaine had refused all connexion with the Brotherhood of S. Gengulphus, our friend had been thinking very seriously lately of his future life, and had determined, contrary to his first resolve, to take Holy Orders. Perhaps some of my readers will here express a hope that he "reformed," gave up his "evil courses," and "thought seriously" of what he was going to do. For me, I do not know. He did not take to wearing his hair long, or to issuing cards with "T. P." (*i. e.* Tea and Prayers) to his friends, or to talking in a pulpit style whenever he was among his fellows. I fancy he talked, and laughed, and rowed pretty much as usual. As to his thoughts, we have nothing to do with them: they are sacred, at least; and a man may not think the less seriously of life and its duties, or of the aftertime, and the great Reckoning Day, because he is genial and pleasant and social among his friends. Are our types of religious devotion all ascetics, think you? Was St. Paul a hermit in a hair-shirt with an

unkempt and unpleasant beard? Is not Xavier among the plague-stricken wretches in the East a better figure than Simeon Stylites on the top of his column? St. Thomas à Becket would not have been any the worse if he had changed his under-clothing oftener. Believe me, it is not well for a young man to become a Savonarola or a Saint Bernard all at once.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN WHICH MR. CHUNTER COMES TO GRIEF.

SINCE the Dons had given the *coup de grace* to the Phlegethon Club, things had been very quiet in St. Chrys'tom's. But Oxford life varies at certain seasons, like all other kinds of life, and there seem to be cycles in which colleges move. For instance, years ago colleges which now are the by-word of the University, held as high a place as Balliol, and boats which now at every succeeding race get lower and lower on the river, were once head of the Isis. So it is with the internal economy of these societies: many slow colleges now were spoken of as very fast a few years back. And so St. Chrys'tom's, which since the extinction of the Club had been respectable enough, about this time became about as noisy a college as any within the sound of Great Tom.

Night after night the most uproarious wines and suppers were held, from which the mellow songsters would issue, about two or three o'clock in the morning, and perform wild and barbaric dances in the quad., accompanied by discordant yells. Quiet men were awakened out of their first sleep, and groaned feebly as they turned over in bed; the Dean's bell would ring furiously, and the sleepy porter would turn out, surly and shivering, and entreat the men to go to their

rooms. Mr. John Boring was naturally engaged in most of these entertainments. He was a freshman; and it is the wont of freshmen either to be very mild (a most objectionable characteristic in any one, to my mind), or to plunge recklessly into all the most noisy and disreputable species of festivity. Not content, however, with drinking his wine, the men were always chaffing Boring, and making him the object of some practical joke. Like the ungrateful hero of antiquity, who is commemorated in the lines—

> "Ulysses to the Cyclop's cave
> Came to see what he could spy out,
> He ate his mutton, drank his wine,
> And then he poked his eye out,"

so these men would partake of Boring's hospitality (the men said his wine was bad, by the way), and then, metaphorically speaking, they poked his eye out. One night some of the most choice spirits of this *coterie* hit upon the brilliant notion of breaking all Boring's windows by way of a finish to the evening. Now although the act of smashing a window may be calculated to afford infinite amusement to the smasher, the owner of the windows does not generally regard it in that light. And no sooner did a handful of judiciously distributed stones do their work upon Mr. Boring's sitting-room windows, than that gentleman emerged frantic with rage, or as one of his persecutors aptly described it, in the language of Bon Gaultier, "wrathy riled." The foe had disappeared, however, too fast for Boring to catch them, and all he could do was to send for the glazier the next morning. The joke was too good to relinquish, so breaking Boring's windows became

an institution; and so well was it managed, that the moment of the dissolution of the glass happened just when Boring's light was extinguished and he had retired to bed after carefully sporting his oak.

After vainly trying to identify any of the aggressors, Mr. Boring determined to lie in wait for his persecutors. He accordingly got down a heavy riding-whip with which he said he used to hunt "down at our place in the country," and armed with this formidable weapon, he sat by his door from ten till three one night; but as he kept his fire and lamp burning, his enemies were too cautious to venture an attack. On the following night, Mr. Boring again took up his position, taking the precaution this time to put out his lamp and to screen his fire. All was quiet till about two in the morning, when Mr. Boring was rudely awakened out of a troubled sleep by the crash which announced the destruction of his windows. Furious and almost half asleep, the freshman rushed out into the now dark and lonely quad.; a sound of running feet was audible, and Boring plunging in the same direction ran against no less a person than Mr. Henry Chunter.

"I've caught you at last, have I?" roared Boring, still furious; and, without more ado, he proceeded to horsewhip Mr. Chunter with a will. Now Henry Chunter was not a fighting man; he was accustomed to speak at home, in various drawing rooms in the Sloane Street quarter, of what he had done in town-and-gown rows in Oxford, uttering dark hints which seemed to signify that he had nearly killed several of the town, but did not care to have it talked of in public. Now, however, when our friend Chunter found Boring's horsewhip circling round him in a very unpleasant manner,

he only roared out lustily for mercy, and disclaimed all knowledge of the cause of his attack. Running as fast as he could, still pursued by Boring, like Tam O'Shanter by the witches, Chunter reached the entry to his rooms, where Boring, finding his arm getting tired, flung away his whip, and hit Mr. Chunter in the face, calling on him fiercely to "come on." Now although Chunter had taken his whipping very quietly, the blow in the face awoke the spirit which even the trampled worm is proverbially supposed to possess, and he attacked Boring in turn. By this time, several men returning to their rooms had turned aside to see the unusual sight of two in-college men fighting briskly in a dark entry. Presently the combatants, still hard at it, came under the lamp, and Boring recognised the face of Mr. Chunter, his own particular friend.

"By Jove! Chunter, I didn't know it was you; really I'm awfully sorry," said Boring.

"Damn you!" shrieked Chunter, "you ought to have known it," and instantly attacked his friend with increased fury. Several of Chunter's friends were present, and his feeling was, "Earl Percy sees my fall."

Boring and Chunter were separated at length; the former did not fight with half so much spirit after he had discovered his mistake. Chunter, it appeared, had never broken the windows after all, but another man confessed it, and asked Boring to horsewhip him; but that hero had done enough.

Mr. Chunter never forgave his quondam friend that horsewhipping; but if Mr. Boring suffered by the loss of his friendship, he had not to deplore his friend's coldness long, for the Fates had decreed that Henry Chunter should not longer continue an ornament to the University. Of course Chunter

had got into bad company from the first; and of course, and as a natural consequence, he went wrong. He was ploughed for "Smalls," as you know; eventually he had "scratched" at "Mods," and on a second attempt had been again ploughed, having shown an utter want of appreciation for Dean Aldrich's lively treatise on Logic. Innumerable bills—"ticks," he called them—were always being showered upon his table; and when Mr. Chunter had neglected to pay the oldest of these, that pleasing missive known as "a lawyer's letter" had reached him.

Let me say a word on this subject. I don't expect to do any good, but a bad system ought to be exposed, even if no improvement results. When a freshman first comes up, flush of money, and full of good resolutions, with his mother's last entreaties and his father's advice still ringing in his innocent ears, he determines never to have a bill, and to pay for everything at once with ready money. He soon finds the difficulty of carrying out this most excellent resolve. In the first place, Oxford is such an expensive place that ready money takes to itself wings in the most surprising manner: next, the tradesmen, with a few exceptions, won't take your money if they can possibly help it. They will be glad to have your name on their books: the money may be convenient to you during term; it is not usual among University gentlemen to pay at once, and so on; and the poor foolish freshman straightway forgets Mentor's teaching, and plunges at once into debt. Well, in his third year, when the bills have accumulated to a frightful extent, and the items (being quite forgotten) can easily be doubled, the senior man, once the freshman, is imperiously requested to pay, or sometimes without a request at all is favoured with a lawyer's letter.

In this document he is informed that unless he pays his debt due to Brown, or Jones, or So-and-so, with an additional three shillings as the price of the letter, by a certain date, he will have an action brought against him in the Vice-Chancellor's Court, where if he loses his cause, as he probably will, he must pay costs; and we all know what that means!

Such is the system; and Mr. Chunter found himself at this time pretty well qualified to discuss its operation. However, I dare say the young man might have escaped these rocks, if he had not struck upon another much more fatal. No one gave Mr. Blower, the Junior Proctor, credit for being sharp or active in his duties; in fact he was a good-natured little man, indolent, and averse to traversing the streets on a cold wet night with a view to entrapping some man without his cap and gown, or smoking "the herb nicotiana" forbidden by the statutes, or otherwise contravening the rules of peace and good manners. There were some things, however, which even Mr. Blower could not help seeing; and when one fine morning one of his attendants and spies summoned the Proctor to witness Mr. Chunter of St. Chrys'tom's openly conversing with a fair young damsel of the milliner class at her window in the Cowley Road, Mr. Blower's eyes were opened. This was too flagrant a case: it was not mere "sporting with Amaryllis in the shade," but an open flirtation in the eye of day. From the house of his charmer the infatuated Chunter betook himself to a photographer's studio in the High, and ascended to the glass-room there to be photographed, with a view doubtless to sending his *carte* to the seductive milliner. Nemesis, however, was upon the track of the foolish young man. He was seated in the mediæval chair of the photographer (their chairs are always mediæval), his head was firmly screwed into the

machine which gives that charming ease and life-like expression to a photograph, the operator had just retired to his camera and enveloped his head in a black cloth, when a startling and totally unexpected apparition emerged, rising ghost-like from the trap-door which communicated with the lower regions. This apparition was of a two-fold character, and presented the stern face of the Marshal closely followed by the fat, white, spectacled visage of the Proctor. Walking up to the helpless Mr. Chunter, the Proctor demanded his name and college; and having extracted that information, retired, leaving our friend to have his likeness taken if he felt so inclined. The photographer, being a Stoic in his way, remarked calmly that it was a "neat catch," and then went on with his picture; and Mr. Chunter was immortalized looking for all the world like the impersonation of the passion Despair.

On returning to college, the young gentleman found a letter awaiting him, requesting him to call on the Junior Proctor at twelve (it was half-past eleven already); and he further learnt from the porter that Mr. Blower had been to St. Chrys'tom's and had had an interview with the Dean. Under these very pleasant auspices, Henry Chunter attended the summons of the Proctor, and was cross-examined by him minutely on the subject of his visit to the Cowley Road. The young fellow made out a long story, though a very poor one, and was finally ordered to come before the Vice-Chancellor that afternoon.

Poor Chunter, when he arrived at the Vice-Chancellor's house, was kept waiting in a room alone, while the great potentate with both the Proctors discussed his crime. I don't know anything more painful of its kind than an ordeal of this sort. There is no appeal: what this *Vehmgericht* chooses to decree is like the law of the Medes and Persians, "which altereth not." Perhaps the Emperor Henry IV.,

shivering in the snow at Canosa, felt as miserable while he watched the immovable door of the stern Hildebrand and saw no hope of relief; but I doubt if he felt more thoroughly wretched than Mr. Chunter in the Vice-Chancellor's dining-room. You see the Emperor was a hero, and Mr. Chunter was not. At last they sent for him; and the hapless youth had to listen to a half-hour's prosing from the Vice-Chancellor, —the worst part of the punishment, I should fancy; and then, by way of a relish, he was told that he was rusticated for a year. Poor Chunter tried to soften the hearts of his judges, but he might as well have tried to mollify the nether mill-stone: your Don is not given to the "melting mood," I can tell you.

So Henry Chunter was sent down. Well! wines and suppers are pleasant things while they last; drags to Wallingford and Witney, steeple-chases at Aylesbury, dinners at the Mitre, lunches at Boffin's, rat-killing in Christ Church meadow, all have their charm; but they all cost money: and when they are combined with ticks at Prior's, and Spiers's, and Hinton's, and half-a-hundred other places, they generally end in one thing. That thing is called by various names by various people: in Oxford it is called "going a mucker." All this the unfortunate Chunter thought over, probably for the first time, as he drank to the dregs that bitterest of all bitter cups—experience.

Mr. Chunter, senior, of Sloane Street, was naturally furious at his son's disgrace, and at once took his name off the college books. We may say good-bye to Henry Chunter here. I believe he subsided into his father's place of business, and became "something in the city." Why are such men ever sent to Oxford, I wonder?

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN WHICH PAUL ROMAINE PUTS ON HIS GOWN.

MEANTIME Paul had been reading on harder than ever for "Greats," and getting more miserable about Edith Challoner. The Challoners were scarcely ever at home at Fairwater: they were always either in Scotland, or in London; and Edith's letters grew fewer by degrees, and, as Paul thought, more cold and preoccupied. Still they had come to no rupture, and our poor friend, harassed as he was with the cares of his reading (and they are not small, trust me) dared not put the fatal question which might shatter all his hopes at once. He began to get more gloomy and bitter every day.

When we first knew him, you will remember he was inclined to be savage, and self-assertive, and to speak sneeringly of women, even to boast of being a misogynist. He had got out of this a great deal under the influence of Oxford life: the influence of Frank Challoner, the companionship of the merry, thoughtless Percy Cheyne, the occasional talk with the rough Fellow of St. Chrys'tom's, Tommy Barker; these had done much to alter Paul for the better. He was no longer conceited and over self-reliant, as young fellows who come up to Oxford fresh from a great school are apt to be; he was not, you may believe, much of a woman-hater since Edith Chal-

loner's eyes had brought him down helpless; but now most of these influences were removed. Frank Challoner was resting quietly in his grave, Percy Cheyne was an outcast, of whose whereabouts Paul was quite ignorant; and as for Edith—well! we will not talk about her: she was acting rightly, I have no doubt; obeying her parents and guardians, doing as she was bid, and never thinking of her own heart's teachings, or of that other heart which her neglect was making desolate. Paul was going through the furnace now, with none of his guardian angels near—at least none that he knew of; and the furnace of an Oxford undergraduate's career is a tolerably hot one sometimes, and woe be to him who has only the light of his own eyes to guide him! You may lose respect for things which you once worshipped, you may think slightingly of old friends and badly of every woman you see, and live for and care for only yourself; and learn it all within hearing of Carfax clock.

The Easter vacation had gone by once more with its rain and dust and wind; once more had the dark blue triumphed from Putney to Mortlake, though Paul's long arms were not visible in the bows; the summer term had begun, and our friend looked upon it as his last. It is a wonderful feeling that, which makes us regard with a certain amount of melancholy everything which we do or see for the last time. I can easily understand the feeling of the poor prisoner in the Bastile, who, when freedom at length came to him after so many years, was unwilling to quit his prison, and looked sadly on his cell, knowing that he saw it for the last time. It matters not if we dislike a thing, if we do it for the last time we feel a sort of tightening somewhere in the throat, and a touch of regret, be it ever so slight. Even when we said "good-bye" for ever

to the old school where we were not too happy, we somehow felt sorry that we should see the old spot no more for ever. Paul, however, had few recollections or associations connected with Oxford which were not pleasant, so that in this his last term he began to regard everything with a sort of affectionate tenderness. He never saw the rosy sunset tints on the tracery of St. Mary's spire, as the sun sank down behind Cumnor and the far-away Gloucestershire hills, without thinking how soon he might exchange the beautiful city for some squalid country town or stupid village, where his oratory would be displayed before a few deaf old women and the sexton on a drowsy Sunday afternoon.

The Union had attractions for him now which it had never had before. Hitherto he had used that most excellent institution without a thought of its value; now he mentally asked himself what he should do when he had no commodious club wherein to write his letters, read his newspaper or his magazine, consult a library, or yawn over a novel. The debates, too, which he had shunned, and which certainly are as a rule very tiresome ordeals, found favour in his eyes, and I believe there are records of his having spoken once or twice on the Liberal side. They were mostly Liberals in the Union in his time—a Conservative candidate had no chance for the Presidency; and these young fellows would rave about the faults of the Government, or the Church, or the world in general, with an assurance and a fixedness of purpose that would do your heart good to listen to. You might read in the Treasurer's Suggestion Book, among a great deal of arrant nonsense, furious diatribes against certain candidates who were just proposed as Presidents. Why was M'Adam of Worcester proposed—a man who did not care for the Irish Church?

Who was Mr. Diggerby of Corpus, we should like to know? These stand side by side with passionate outcries for nail-brushes, and savage denunciations against the unfortunate Treasurer, who we will hope was like Gallio and "cared for none of these things." Paul, I have said, began in these last days to regard the Union as a sort of friend, and to look forward with regret to bidding it farewell. As it turned out, our young man was to see more of Oxford than he expected. Still at this time he felt as I have told you.

Even the guides, those strange specimens of a strange and vast fraternity, interested him, as they hung for ever about the Schools' Quad., and pounced upon any stranger who might stop to gaze on the wonders of Oxford. Then his scout, a very respectable member of a doubtful community, awakened some sentiments of affection in our friend just before parting. I only hope that Paul had never suffered from the tender mercies of his henchman. I have heard of a scout who bought his newly-arrived master the usual assortment of brushes and pails, and received a gratuity from the tradesman for the order, and two days after returned the goods at a small reduction, making the old utensils serve his purpose, and pocketing the proceeds of the transaction. Another worthy of the same class came ruefully to his innocent master, and told him that he had had an accident and broken the lamp-shade. The innocent master told him to order another, and never mind the misfortune. The scout, I need scarcely say, had sold the shade that very morning.

Dick Swallow became at this time a noticeable character in Paul's eyes; and really that worthy deserved some notice. Who does not remember Dick's shambling stooping figure, clad in an old greenish jacket, as familiar an object to Oxford men as

Magdalen Tower? He was, and still is, a perfect specimen of a "hanger-on." A fellow who did odd jobs, took messages for the men in college, fetched their *testamur* from the Schools, and occasionally acted as a sort of domestic servant of the men lodging out of college: this he called "valeting." Dick Swallow owes most of his fame, however, to his powers as a reader, and even the redoubtable Silas Wegg may find a rival in him. Some men at Oxford were, and for that matter *are* sufficiently foolish to employ Dick to read to them the "crib" or translation of their books previous to their examinations. On the subject of proper names Dick Swallow had a theory of his own, which no argument could alter. For instance, not all the learning of the Schools would make him call Sennacherib anything but "Snatchcrab," whilst the lover of Brisëis was always called "Achills" by Dick, and nothing would shake his belief in his own style of pronunciation. On the books which he read, too, Dick had his own views; of Herodotus he said that "he were a fine old fellow, but he told some tremendous lies, sure-ly;" and as to the fact which Livy mentions about the splitting of the Alps by vinegar under the direction of Hannibal, Dick laughed at the notion altogether, and suggested that they must have had a tolerably large distillery in the neighbourhood. I am bound to say that most of the men to whom Dick Swallow read were ploughed. When, however, any of Mr. Swallow's patrons managed to scrape through the Schools, that worthy used to announce with great glee that Mr. So-and-so had "got it," meaning his *testamur*, and that he, Dick Swallow, knew that he would get it, and but for him, the aforesaid Dick, he never *would* have got it: propositions which I take the liberty of doubting. Paul, you may suppose, did not call in the aid of Mr. Swallow,

and was tolerably ready for the ordeal when the first day of examination drew near.

The Pass examination was over; the usual mistakes (*Oxonicé* "muckers") had been made. One luckless man had said with perfect gravity that Jonah's gourd spake unto him and reproved him; and, as if not satisfied with this mark of erudition, announced that Obadiah was a prophet of the Lord who hid himself by fifties in a cave, and that Moses was obliged to leave Egypt owing to "that unpleasant little affair with Potiphar's wife." The best things, however, were in translating the Greek Testament. One ingenious youth being put on in the part relating to Herod's death, translated this passage as follows:—"Καὶ γενόμενος σκωληκόβρωτος, ἐξέψυξεν." "And having attained to the dignity of a *Scolecobrote*, he died in the performance of the arduous duties of that office." This gentleman finished by announcing that John the Baptist was the son of Mary Magdalene, and was then promptly sent out of the Schools.

After all this was over, Paul went in with the Class-men to a week's very hard work; and after many days of anxious waiting—how anxious none know except those who have tried—the Class-list appeared, and he found that his ambition was satisfied, and that he had taken his First.

You may suppose what rejoicing there was at Inglefell: how the gentle mother's eyes sparkled when she heard of her boy's triumph. She had never doubted of his success; was he not cleverer and better than all other young men since such beings were first heard of? Very blithely did little Maude obey her mother's summons to Oxford later in the term, when Paul, having passed Second Schools (not without a close shave, I must confess, for Euclid bothered him) was

ready to put on his gown—*the* gown *par excellence*, which signifies that the letters B.A. may henceforth be legally appended to your name.

Our friends came up three or four days before the degree-day, and revelled in the delights of the summer term. Never did flowers look so bright as those in St. John's gardens, never were such cool shady nooks as under the May-trees by New College; nowhere else in the universe could there be such cyder-cup, such melting ices, such seductive sherry-cobbler. So thought the lady visitors to Oxford one and all, I am certain; I know that Mrs. Romaine and Maude believed that there could be no better place than Oxford, and no finer fellow than Mr. Paul. It is an innocent belief; why should we persecute the pretty bigots for their harmless fanaticism? They saw everything this time, saw every grade of men, from the Christ Church nobleman with his gold tuft and silk gown, to the newest freshman at Teddy Hall. They even made fair progress in Oxford slang; learnt that the name Master did not refer to the bearer of the scholastic ferule, tried to give up speaking of the High *Street*, to call the Cherwell *Charwell*, and even occasionally spoke of St. Mary's Hall as "*Skimmery*."

The last day of term, and the degree-day came at length; and the crowd of mothers and sisters and friends and lovers betook themselves to the room close by the old Sheldonian Theatre, where is performed the mysterious operation called "taking a degree." There was the Vice-Chancellor, resplendent in his scarlet robes and bands, sitting in state on a great chair; on either side were the two Proctors, looking the impersonation of stern authority to the uninitiated eyes of the ladies, and holding the lists of the candidates for degrees.

There, too, were the Registrar and his clerk, and the Deans of each college with their gay crimson hoods on, waiting to introduce their men. It was a pleasant sight, a sort of vantage ground on which the Past and the Future seemed to meet; for there sat white-headed old fellows who had taken their degrees ages ago, years before the memory of any but the oldest Dons and the most infirm scout; there they were smiling kindly on the young men who were waiting so eagerly in their little white ties to throw off their tattered old gowns and to assume the *toga* of the full-blown Bachelor. The one party had fought the battle and forgotten most of its triumphs and most of its defeats, and were looking on calmly for the end: their gowns were old and moth-eaten, and their hoods worn and faded. The other band were fresh and instinct with life; the world had been little more than a play-room to them as yet; they thought the future a very bright panorama indeed, poor fellows! "Ignorance *is* bliss," especially in youth.

But I must not moralize: the business of the day has begun. First of all, the higher degrees are conferred. A rather cadaverous worried-looking man—a schoolmaster, somebody says—comes in to be made a Doctor of Civil Law. He wears the blue and ermine-edged hood of a B.C.L. now; and after a short Latin speech from the Vice-Chancellor (for nothing of importance can be done in Oxford without this), he retires, and presently returns "the observed of all observers" clad in the gorgeous scarlet and pink gown of a D.C.L., with a hood of the same colours. Then a Doctor of Music receives his degree, and appears as a splendid creature in a white flowered gown with rose-coloured sleeves, and is smiled upon by many ladies who lately heard the performance

of his "Exercise" for his degree before the University in the Sheldonian Theatre. Next, the old B.A.'s are transformed into M.A.'s, and then come the undergraduates, a goodly crowd, who have passed the grim portal of the Schools, and are to cease to be undergraduates forthwith.

Each Proctor reads out a list of their names, and then both these functionaries perform a hurried walk up and down the room for a few minutes, to the intense astonishment of the spectators. Both Proctors look anything but dignified, and rather ashamed of themselves, as they go through this ceremony—a relic of the times when the tradesmen used to frequent the degree-room and "pluck" the Proctor's gown to stop any luckless debtor from taking his degree. This interesting form having been concluded, the men are presented by the Deans of their several colleges in a Latin address to the Vice-Chancellor, who responds in the same tongue, and the thing is done! The man who five minutes ago looked a regular ragamuffin in his tattered commoner's gown, has now tipped his scout, who stands ready outside with the long-sleeved vestment of the Bachelor of Arts; and our friend is a ragamuffin no more, but a grave and decorous young man with a swelling gown and a rabbit-skin edge to his hood.

When the train left Oxford that afternoon Paul Romaine had seen the last of Alma Mater as an undergraduate; and, as he thought, was saying good-bye to the dear old place for ever.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCERNING IMAGE WORSHIP.

I WONDER how many thousands of people, since the day when king Nebuchadnezzar set up his image of gold in the plains of Dura, have been content to follow the example of the Babylonians and to fall down before endless images of their own or somebody else's setting up? One thing I know, that in these days there are very few Shadrachs, Meshechs, and Abednegos to offer any resistance to the practice. The great iconoclastic schism in the Church managed to upset a few idols, and to produce one or two results—among others the establishment of Charlemagne on the throne of what he thought was to be an eternal empire; but for all that, no iconoclast has ever arisen strong enough to overthrow the images of which I am speaking, nor will they be overturned till the day when everything shall roll away from its place and become nothing. Of course my acute and intelligent readers have discovered that under this allegory I am referring to the popular worship of Mammon, a deity who has never been neglected, to any great extent, and whose temples were never better filled than just now. If you ask me why I have thus unjustifiably gone off into allegory—a style of writing at the best of times rather fatiguing—I can only say that I was tempted to it by the

misfortunes of my hero; for it was at this time that poor Paul learnt for himself the full meaning of this popular idolatry. He had come down from Oxford flushed with success, naturally very well pleased with himself, and comforted with the prospect of beginning life under tolerably favourable circumstances. For although perhaps in this much-vaunted nineteenth century of ours (will people ever leave off talking about it, I wonder?) a snug little business in the hardware line is a much better thing than an Oxford First Class, yet a young man who has chosen the Groves of Academé instead of the spot where "merchants most do congregate," will not pursue his profession under worse auspices because his name appears as A. 1 in the "Calendar." Paul, therefore, being elated and happy, poor fellow, must needs tempt his fate by writing to Mr. Challoner, declaring his love for that gentleman's daughter, and requesting his consent to their engagement.

It was an honest manly letter, such as a frank generous-hearted young fellow would write; and just at this time being, as I have said, intoxicated with his success, he did not think very much about the character of the man to whom he was writing. Of course he did not press for a speedy marriage: he told Mr. Challoner that he should be ordained shortly, and take pupils, and that his high degree and some influence at Oxford would enable him to obtain these easily, he doubted not. He would work hard and write for the press, and do everything to enable him to make Edith happy, if only her father would give his consent. All this and much more Paul said in his letter; but before we read Mr. Challoner's reply we must see how things were going on at Fairwater.

Outwardly things were going on at Fairwater much as *usual*. But the fatal fire was only concealed by deceptive

ashes. In reality, things were, and had been going on at Fairwater as badly as they possibly could. A great change had come over Mr. Challoner since Frank's death. All the hopes and preconceived plans of a proud, dull, obstinate man had been overthrown by his son's untimely end; and Mr. Challoner turned to new fields for excitement and interest. He had always lived in a style which induced people to think him a very wealthy man, and had brought up his children to consider themselves somewhat, and to count on the influence and power which their money would give them. Now he began to realize the fact that he had been living under false pretences—that he was by no means the rich man he had pretended to be; and now that the hope of a rich wife for Frank was buried in that poor youth's grave, it became Mr. Challoner's object to secure a rich husband for Edith, and so try to retrieve the sinking fortunes of his house. I have said that the Challoners had seldom been at Fairwater lately; Mr. Challoner found it less expensive to live elsewhere, especially when he stayed with his friends, which he did a good deal. By the way, you would have supposed from his stately manner that he was conferring a favour on the people whom he honoured by eating their dinners and occupying their houses.

During all this time, Mr. Challoner had many and very mysterious interviews and messages in and from the City, and he had also a new friend who was very close in his attendance on him, whether abroad or at home. This friend was a certain John Gregg, a merchant of some considerable importance in the City. He was said to be more things than a merchant; some people had heard that he was a money-lender; at all events he was well known upon 'Change, and had lately taken

a villa at Forest Hill. He was every inch a City man, was this John Gregg. You could not be in his company for half-an-hour without finding the dust and dirt and atmosphere of the City making themselves felt. He was a short stout man of forty, with a red rough face, and a pair of whiskers known among City men as "mutton-chop whiskers." He was healthy, wealthy he was reported to be, and wise he no doubt was, after the wisdom of this world, and more especially of that part of it which is contained within the liberties of the City of London. In his manners, Mr. Gregg displayed that easy, boisterous, self-assertive, not to say rude, style of address which any one who has travelled by an early morning omnibus Citywards knows so well. He always knew everything about every possible event or person long before anybody else. If any news appeared in the "Times," he had heard it in the City the day before; he rather wished you to suppose that he had the privilege of reading all the papers some few hours before they were published. Such was Mr. Challoner's new friend—a strange one, you will think, for such a family, but new circumstances make new friends. It soon became evident, or would have become so if there had been any one to notice it, that Mr. Gregg the City man had acquired a wonderful power over Mr. Challoner the country gentleman; that he treated him quite familiarly, even disrespectfully sometimes, and made himself so very much at home at Fairwater that you would have supposed that the house belonged to him. Mr. Gregg, though essentially a man of business, was by no means impervious to the attractions of female beauty. He considered that as a business man of some standing and pretensions, he ought to have a wife and a regular establishment at his place at Forest Hill. He determined on

the advisability of taking a wife, just as he thought of starting a brougham, or buying a villa. Accordingly, Mr. Gregg had cast his eyes upon his friend's daughter, and had determined that Edith Challoner would do very well for what he wanted, just as he had lately decided that a carriage with dark green panels and a pair of bay horses would suit his book perfectly.

Now Edith's views were by no means of a similar character. She no sooner discovered what Mr. Gregg meant, than she decided that he would not do at all. Even if there had been no Paul Romaine in the case, I do not think Edith would have felt differently. Strange to say, Mr. Challoner highly approved of Mr. Gregg's suit, and gave it open encouragement. Mrs. Challoner, too, though she did not much like Mr. Gregg, who was apt to get tired of her stories, was also on the same side. At length Mr. Gregg, who, as a man of business, could not be supposed to waste his time in uncertain dalliance, proposed to Edith, and was rejected very emphatically.

Now, however, a new complication arose. Mr. Challoner, on hearing of his daughter's refusal, was grieved, deeply grieved, and also angry. He spoke seriously to Edith on the subject, and finding her likely to remain firm, he threw off for once his cold stateliness of manner, and assumed the man for a little. He told his daughter, with tears in his eyes, that he was all but ruined; that he had entered into rash speculations, partly under the guidance of Mr. Gregg, and had lost vast sums; that at this present time he was greatly in debt; that the very house he was in was no longer his, and that Gregg could turn him out of it when he liked. Under these circumstances, he entreated Edith to save him, to save the honour of their house, and to marry a man who was wealthy and who was fond of her, and, above all, who held their pro-

perty in his power. It was while things were in this state at Fairwater that poor Paul's letter arrived. Of course it made Mr. Challoner furious. His temper had not improved of late; and now, when his affairs were in the worst possible condition, this young fellow, without a penny—literally without a penny in the world, coolly asked him for his daughter—the rock on which his hopes were built. It was really too bad! Yes, it was too bad, no doubt. It was much better to give up his flesh and blood to the embraces of a man whom he knew to be a rascal (though of course a respectable one), and to turn away angrily from a young man who, though honest, manly, and truthful, and distinguished withal in the outset of the race for fame, was yet poor. Oh! by all means reject his suit! what can he offer? youth, health, strength, a powerful intellect and a willing heart, ready for labour and rough living? Is this all? He is poor, I think you said? Then cast him out, by all means. We suffer no such votaries in our temple. "Gold and gold, and nothing but gold," is ever our cry, as it was that of Miss Kilmansegg. Turn out the intruder; he has not a golden wedding-garment on!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FELLOW OF ST. ANSELM'S.

MR. CHALLONER'S reply to Paul's letter was a model of polite insolence. You would have supposed that you were reading an imperial rescript, instead of the letter of a ruined man who was about to sell his daughter to keep himself from prison. Mr. Challoner begged to decline most emphatically the suit which Mr. Romaine had done him the honour to mention. He was glad to hear of Mr. Romaine's success at the University; but could not see how that affected his matrimonial prospects. Miss Challoner's hand was already engaged, and if such had not been the case, Mr. Romaine's proposal would scarcely have been feasible. He (Mr. Challoner) looked for a high position, an influential and wealthy position for his beloved daughter: these Mr. Romaine could scarcely offer. Then he wound up by giving a little stately advice *gratis*, which like all such advice was very unacceptable. Mr. Romaine was very young, he said: he might add that he had shown himself inconsiderate in this matter; but he advised him to persevere in his calling, whatever it might be, and he had no doubt that success would crown his efforts. Meantime he begged to remain Mr. Romaine's obedient servant.

Enclosed in the same envelope was a little note in Edith's

handwriting. A poor, cold, heartless little note it seemed. It told Paul that Edith must abide by her father's decision, and that she was sure that under the circumstances any other course would be very indiscreet, and could only end in unhappiness.

O these common-places! how galling they are to a wounded spirit! Poor Paul chafed under them more than he would have done at an angry letter. He did not know that Edith had written these lines in the presence of her stepmother and at her father's dictation. He only judged from the letter itself, and he was ready to be angry and unjust, as we all are, God knows! He thought, too, that Edith might have given him one word of comfort, one drop of balm to soothe his smarting wound; but Paul did not know the mysteries of Mammon-worship thoroughly, or he would never have expected anything of the sort. As it was, he pretended to take the thing with a high hand, he muttered something from "Hamlet" about the brevity of woman's love, and threw the cold letters into the fire to warm them withal. But it was a hollow pretence; his mother and sister saw through it at once and did their utmost to comfort him: but there are times when even a mother's love, and a sister's tenderness are not enough, and this was one. All his past seemed wiped out—his success, his praises, his First Class, were all like so many apples of Sodom; they had all turned to ashes. I don't know what he might not have done in his despair, but for a new pursuit which was given to him at this time.

Dr. Benison, the Master of St. Chrys'tom's, wrote to tell Paul that a Fellowship was vacant at St. Anselm's College, and strongly advised him to come up and try for it. The advice came opportunely; Paul was eager to get away from

the scene of his sorrow; "something new," was his cry perpetually. And here was a good opportunity for beginning a new kind of life, as well as providing for himself—he had only himself to think of now. So our friend thanked the Master for his kindness, and went up in due time to try for the Fellowship. There were several candidates, and a Balliol man who had taken a First, and had been Ireland Scholar as well, was the favourite. When the result was known, however, it appeared that neither the Ireland Scholar nor a Trinity man of vast powers in Latin composition, was the lucky candidate; but that Paul Romaine, late Scholar of St. Chrys'tom's, was the new Fellow of St. Anselm's.

Paul heard of his triumph grimly enough. What was it to him? He might have enjoyed his victory once for the sake of others; but now what did he care? So the poor fellow talked; and yet he was glad that he could hide his head in a quiet college and do pretty much as he liked: it suited his state of mind.

Every one who knows anything about Oxford, knows that St. Anselm's is one of the most beautiful of the colleges there. No visitor, even if he be but a Saturday to Monday excursionist, has failed to take a walk in the cool silent cloisters, and listen to the musical bells of St. Anselm's. The President of the college was a little, mild, timid man, whom nobody cared about, and everybody liked. As for regarding him in the light of a ruler, it was absurd. All the attributes of command belonged to Mrs. Petty—Penelope the men called her—who was a tall, angular, stern woman of Evangelical proclivities. It was currently reported that she had edited an edition of Aristotle; and though the name of FRANCISCUS PETTY, S. T. P. was allowed to appear on the title-page, every

one saw the hand of the stern Penelope in every line of the work. In the calm seclusion of St. Anselm's the new Fellow took up his residence, a moody and mournful man. You know that he was never given to seeing things *au couleur de rose*, and now he had enough to make him miserable, you will admit. St. Anselm's was a quiet, comfortable, drowsy college, where every one did pretty much as he liked, except the President perhaps; and Paul got into a way of nursing his grief to keep it warm, which was anything but good for him. He had been ordained upon receiving his Fellowship; but he was not inclined to become a Savonarola, though there there were plenty of places in Oxford which wanted a vigorous reformer. He was gradually settling down into a College Don, and I think I cannot speak of him under more unfavourable circumstances. The daily routine of wearisome monotony; the same lectures (not many of them I admit, for hard work is unsuited to the constitution of the Don), the same formal attendance at chapel, the same walks, the same subjects of conversation in Hall and in the Common-Room; all these were gradually contracting his mind, making him simply a man of a class, narrowing his sympathies for the world around him, rendering him pompous and conceited, yet withal awkward and nervous, teaching him to measure everything by the standard of his own college —making him, in a word, a Don. At first he imagined that he should sympathize with the men of the college, try to help them in their difficulties, and be their friend. But he soon found this was very impracticable. The men treated him as a Don partly, and partly as a Probationary Fellow, one who was neither fish nor flesh; not one of them, nor yet one of their rulers. They were awkward and constrained to him, and he insensibly became so to them. When in time he be-

came a full Fellow, and, owing to a vacancy, a Tutor into the bargain (I am hurrying on towards the close now), Paul wanted very little to make him a thorough Don. He had yet some sympathy with the outer world, however; perhaps his mother and Maude had something to do with this. He wrote, too, occasionally for the press, and so kept himself from becoming whelmed in the stagnation of mere college life.

Paul had not made any close friendship with his fellow Dons: they were all good fellows enough, but had their own pursuits, and didn't care about Paul, nor he about them. One of them, however, attracted our friend's notice from the first. This was the Senior Fellow of St. Anselm's, Edward Temple. Years before the next in the list of Fellows had come up, Temple had been established at St. Anselm's. Men shook their heads and smiled knowingly when his name was mentioned; some said vaguely that he was "very eccentric;" some bolder still told you in a whisper that the Senior Fellow of St. Anselm's was *mad*.

Paul had from the first been attracted by Temple's mild, gentle face, which was handsome in its way, and had probably been very handsome in youth; his sad restless eyes, looking out from the white hair which hung long and ill-kept about his face, fixed the Junior Fellow's interest at once. No one who looked at Edward Temple could doubt that some great sorrow preyed upon his mind; and perhaps it was this that drew Paul's attention to him, and made him feel that there was a sort of link between them. The wounded deer always seek each other and leave their healthy neighbours. It was a similar feeling which drew these two strange friends, the extremes of the college, the Senior and the Junior Fellow, together.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SENIOR FELLOW'S STORY.

One night Paul had been reading till late in his rooms, and then had sat for an hour or so looking into the fire and tracing the old scenes and faces which are always appearing for us all in that glowing picture-gallery. Tired and restless after all this, Paul went to his window, just as the musical chimes of St. Anselm's clock announced three in the morning, and opening the window looked upon the moonlit cloisters. It was a ghostly scene enough. The white wan moonlight streamed over the beautiful tower of the chapel, and tinging the ivy with a mournful unearthly hue, poured full upon the quiet cloisters, leaving some corners dark and mysterious, and bringing out points of sculpture into strong relief.

Paul stood looking at the scene (and it was a very fair one), feeling, perhaps, that strange superstitious awe which is called forth by a moonlight night in perfect solitude, when he was astonished to hear the sound of footsteps echoing along the cloisters beneath him. St. Anselm's was a very orderly, quiet college; the latest "wine" had been over long ago, and men never "knocked in" at such hours in the morning. So Paul looked down curiously to see who this late wanderer might be, and presently recognized Mr. Temple,

the Senior Fellow, advancing in the full blaze of the moonlight, his head uncovered, and his white hair gleaming in the silver radiance which flooded the cloisters.

His face wore a wild and troubled expression; he frequently paused, extended his arms, and muttered to himself: then went on again clasping his forehead as though in pain. Twice he made the circuit of the court, and then Paul, fearing that he must be ill, hurried down and met him as he was gazing sadly and listlessly through one of the grey ivy-clad openings of the cloisters. He seemed troubled at finding that his walk had been observed.

"I often wander about at night," he said, in answer to Paul's enquiry. "I can't sleep well, and I have dreams, dreadful dreams sometimes.

He shuddered as he spoke, and half turned away. Paul, however, was determined not to leave him alone in the cold cloisters, and at length persuaded Temple to accompany him to his room. There the Senior Fellow soon recovered his ordinary calm gentle behaviour. Paul was not unnaturally curious to know more of so singular a man, and as he was more intimate with Temple than any other man in college, he ventured to press him upon the subject of his sorrow. After a little the Senior Fellow said, almost abruptly,—

"You have known more of me, and seen more of me, Romaine, than almost any man of this college, though you have been here such a short time, and I for so many weary years. I feel drawn towards you in a manner which I am at a loss to explain; perhaps it is that we have both known deep sorrow. You have trusted me; I will be no less frank with you; but I must pledge you to keep my secret."

Paul at once assured him that tale-bearing was by no means his vocation.

"Well, then," continued the Senior Fellow, passing his hand across his forehead with a weary air, as though he doubted his own power to proceed, "you may suppose, my friend, that there was a time when Edward Temple of St. Anselm's was something more than the wild, lonely, sad man whom you see now. There *was* such a time—long, long ago, it seems to me. I was as bright, and gay, and high-spirited a youngster as any in Oxford. I read hard, it is true, but it was because I was ambitious. I longed to win a name, not so much for myself as for my cousin Mary. I loved my cousin Mary, and she had told me how much she hoped to read of my success, and to see my name among the high places of the University. This was my incentive; for this I toiled night and day, and yet did not become a hermit as I am now. Most men of my day knew Temple of St. Anselm's, and I could row, and game, and drink and sing with the merriest of them then. Well, I must not weary you; I finished my course, I gained my honours, and won a smile and praise from cousin Mary. It was not much of a reward, perhaps; but it was enough for me. Soon after, we met in Italy: I pressed my suit, and hoped that all my boyish dreams were near fulfilment.

"Then my friend came upon the scene. He had been my chosen companion at school—had been my dearest friend at college. Though often passionate and unreasonable with me—and God knows how much I may have provoked him!—we were ever the closest of friends. He knew my love for my cousin, and we had talked it over a thousand times. Well, we were all together in Italy, and when I thought my hopes

were nearest completion, I found that my cousin loved my friend. Let me hurry over the wretched details. I scarcely found it out before I heard of their marriage. I was mad—mad with disappointment and rage. You know what I am now. I was fiery and furious enough then. I and he who had been my friend quarrelled; our quarrel was as bitter as our friendship had been sweet. He challenged me to a duel, and I was only too ready to accept his challenge."

The pale, white-haired Fellow paused for a moment, and Paul could see that his face worked convulsively.

"I have reached the end," he said, after a little. "We met one bright morning: I escaped unhurt (oh! would to God I had died then!) he fell badly wounded. He recovered, at least so they said; but I know that he died before the first year of his marriage was over; and I know that my hand killed him."

He buried his face in his hands, and his whole frame shook with the violence of his emotion. With no small difficulty Paul managed to calm him and conduct him to his own rooms. His secret was easy enough to understand. His fancy that the wound received in the duel had caused his friend's early death, had haunted him till his powerful intellect had given way on that one subject, and on that only. As he said himself, there would be no peace for him till he should be laid to sleep under the chancel in the calm, beautiful chapel of St. Anselm's.

I am drawing near the end now. The slight thread which I have spun is fast running off the reel, and I must crowd many events into a few pages. The time passes on swiftly for me, while Paul Romaine finds it drag, perhaps, in the calm precincts of St. Anselm's. His face loses none of its

melancholy, none of its sternness; yet he is kindly and gentle to the men who go to his lectures or meet him elsewhere. Perhaps he remembers the Dean of St. Chrys'tom's, and avoids the following of his ways and manners. His life is very isolated, as it needs must be, and he knows or cares little for the outer world. Now and again he hears strange stories told in the Common-Room, when the Dons are inclined to chat, and the old tawny port has dissolved a little of their frigidity.

Some of the tales are scandalous enough, and such as Paul does not expect to hear from these "most potent, grave, and reverend seniors." He learns things about the inner life of the University, which as an undergraduate he never heard of; but he consoles himself with the notion that there *are* a few things known only to that same undergraduate body which would astonish the Dons not a little if they only came to hear of them. Paul heard among other things from the fat jolly little Bursar of St. Anselm's, how a certain man of his college once was visited by a fair young lady, his cousin, and how she was introduced by this same St. Anselm's man to all the leading Dons and all the best society in Oxford; and how at a certain little *recherché* entertainment, when more than one grave academic dignitary was present, the fair young lady was so inconsiderate in a moment of excitement as to utter something very like an oath; and how upon enquiry the young lady turned out not to be the cousin of the St. Anselm's man; and how the aforesaid man was ignominiously sent away.

Then, too, Paul heard of a certain well-known Oxford bookseller and publisher who fell foul of a Bishop in this wise. The bookseller was arranging some pamphlets in the Bishop's room, and happened to take up a paper written by a certain

Mr. W., no obscure person in the days when George the Third was king.

"My lord," says the unconscious bookseller, "I have heard that this Mr. W., who was called 'the friend of the people,' could never, owing to his tyranny, keep a servant on his premises."

Upon which the Bishop turned round fiercely upon the astonished bibliopolist, and hissed through his episcopal teeth:—

"It was so reported, sir; but it was a lie! He was my grandfather!"

Many queer things are said and done at Oxford which the world knows nothing about, believe me. There are strange tales told—strange, yet true—of grave Fellows, high in office, dabbling in railway shares, and what not, and speculating to a ruinous extent with others' money; stories of men who, when men of their own college have been drowning in the river, have expressed the wish that they had been introduced, as then they might have saved them; darker stories of men who have gained Fellowships by bribing the printers, and seeing the papers before the examination. I hope this last practice is a thing of the past: at all events it would be almost impossible to perform such dishonest trickery now. Still, in spite of the University Commissioners, everything with regard to Fellowships is not right. "The Favourite" is pretty certain to come in first, and the winning colours are thoroughly well known in some (though I am free to confess, very few) cases, as any one who has read the newspapers lately must be able to testify.

I am reaching the end of my history so rapidly, that I may not linger over the Common-Room tales, to which Paul

Romaine listened for a long time. During that time he heard that Mr. Challoner had come to sudden misfortune, that Fairwater was deserted, and that the family was living in obscure lodgings near London. He did not know worse than this. He did not know that the marriage between Edith and Mr. Gregg had been hurried on in spite of all the entreaties of the poor lamb who had been marked out for the sacrifice, and that the wedding was fixed for the third day from that on which Mr. Gregg broke his neck while hunting with the Cliffside harriers. The death of this man relieved Edith from her doom, but it did not protect her father from ruin; on the contrary, it rather accelerated it. Within a few days, Mr. Challoner, once the cold, proud, stately gentleman, appeared as a white-haired, broken, querulous invalid, in a dull house near Islington; and his wife—now very soured as to her temper—and his pale sad daughter, were with him in the house of his affliction.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE VOYAGE OF THE LADY CLARA.

A FEW more rapid touches, and the picture is done! Percy Cheyne, who has disappeared from these pages since the death of poor Gabrielle, disappeared also very soon from Mr. Marmaduke Derry's company. The stage was insufferable to him after Gabrielle's sad end. Perhaps he never knew how much he had cared for her till he heard the first clod fall harshly upon her coffin. He quickly closed his engagement with the good-natured manager, and went out to begin the world again. He fell in with an old friend: of his uncle he heard nothing—desired to hear nothing; but by the help of his friend, Percy obtained an appointment in New York, and sailed thither. It was a poor position enough, but he was glad to take it. Of Percy's life in America I know little, and therefore shall not dwell upon it. There are none who can tell now what he endured, what he felt as often as the wind and the seas and the ships brought a recollection of home.

It was a stirring time in America: the great war was raging, and the American world was unhinged. In the South, the cloud of battle was hanging dark and threatening; there

were wild reports abroad—stories of Butler, and Lee, and M'Clellan, and the good soldier "Stonewall" Jackson. Men sang a strange hymn about "John Brown's body," and the evil days were come. Percy saw troops and volunteers marching away daily and hourly, till at last he could bear it no longer, and marched away to battlewards as war correspondent to a Northern newspaper, though fully determined to join in the fighting too.

Men read his vigorous sparkling articles, written on old letters, on board steamboats, often in peril of his life; and seemed to hear the roar of artillery and the clash of steel as they read. I know little of Percy's doings at this time, but I know that he was seen on more than one bloody field, and that none were so furious in the charge, so reckless of life, or so tender to the wounded as he. This campaigning had lasted for some time, when one day several prisoners were brought into the camp, some sullen, all smoking, one singing "My Maryland" with all his might and main, in spite of sundry hints to be quiet administered with a bayonet. One of these prisoners was a spy: he had been suspected for a long time, and at last had been taken on the spot. "Short rede, good rede" was his sentence—he was to be shot at sundown. A little before the time, Percy Cheyne received a message from the spy, begging to see him. On reaching the log-hut, where the man was, strongly ironed and guarded by two sentries, Percy was admitted, and found himself alone with a sickly, miserable looking man, who yet preserved, in his old patched uniform and dyed moustache, an air of flash gentility.

"You don't know me—never saw me before, sir, I suppose?" he said.

"Never, that I can recollect," answered Percy. "What do you want with me?"

"I want to do an act of justice," said the spy. "I've done enough of bad in my time; I'd like to have one good act down to my account before I go. I think, Mr. Cheyne,"—Percy had used his own name in America—"that you know a Mr. Romaine, who was at Oxford some time ago?"

Percy started involuntarily. "Yes, I know him, or rather I *did* know," he said; "but what can you have to say of him?"

"Not much, but it is to the purpose. I knew you were his friend at Oxford; I found it out lately. Well, among other things that I have to be ashamed of, I stole a will: not for myself, though: a greater rascal than I am set me on to it. That will bequeaths a large fortune to the Romaines, and that will is now here in my possession. There's no time for talking; get me writing paper and a pen, and I'll draw up this statement for you."

Percy procured him the necessary materials, and Halkett the spy wrote and signed a brief account of his robbery of the will, and the circumstances which led to it.

"Never mind what my motives were," he said, when he had signed the paper; "perhaps I wanted to make a good thing of the secret, and to have my thumb upon that villain Hyllyer; perhaps I had a grudge against young Romaine. However that's all over now. There's no one else who knows of this, except Hyllyer and you and me: the other man, the lawyer Slingsby, was murdered in a row down in Virginia. Two things you must promise me—a dying man, remember: to take this will home to the Romaines, and to prosecute Hyllyer for felony. You'll do both?"

"Most certainly," answered Percy. He took the will and the declaration, and not long after the spy's prison and his place in this world were alike empty.

Homewards, with a fair wind and a flowing sail, went Percy Cheyne: homewards, full of bright hopes and eager expectations. He did not find the way long, for Hope is the best of fellow-passengers. At last, he thought, the sun was breaking through the clouds: he could fulfil the hasty half promise which he had once given to Paul, to be one day more grateful than he seemed then. He carried with him the means of making Paul and his family rich: was not that a good passport? He might hope again to enter the family from which he had slunk ignominiously. The past might be forgiven: it was not such a very black record; and if Maude had not forgotten him, had not ceased to love him, how hard he would work to achieve a position—to gain a livelihood—if only he might make her his wife! All these pleasant dreams beguiled the way till Percy was once more in England.

Without giving himself time for rest, he set off at once for Inglefell. He reached Grey Abbots late at night, and very tired, and determined to defer his visit till next morning. As it was vacation time, Percy hoped to find Paul with his friends. Before Percy had started from Grey Abbots on the following morning, the bells suddenly rang out a merry peal from the tower of the Abbey Church. Why was it, I wonder, that their music struck harshly upon Percy's ear? He turned abruptly on the waiter of the inn, and asked him why the bells were ringing.

"That's for the wedding, sir."

"Whose wedding?"

"You must be a stranger down here, sir," said the waiter, "or you'd have known that young Mr. Benson of the City Bank is to be married to-day."

"To Miss Romaine, I suppose?" said Percy, whose voice trembled in spite of his self-command.

"Just so, sir. The carriage will be here directly."

And so his hopes had come to this! This was the ending of his day-dreams! Well, well! no one was the wiser, though poor Percy did look rather pale as he joined the crowd presently who were going to see the marriage. Very fair and fresh looked little Maude as she stood at the altar with big Tom Benson at her side, he brimming over with love, and joy, and nervousness. At the altar too, stood Dr. Vincent, the good old Dean of Newhampton, and by his side was Paul Romaine, looking tall and gaunt in his surplice, not like the Paul of old days: the Fellow of St. Anselm's was thinner, and paler, and sterner than Paul Romaine of St. Chrys'tom's. All this the good people of Grey Abbots saw, and among them a young man with a sunburnt face and eager melancholy eyes, whom nobody knew or cared about.

Well, it was all over at last; and the two who were just made one flesh went away to be happy, and knew nothing of the young man called Percy Cheyne, and his sorrow. That young man arranged his plans with his usual precipitation. He hurried back to the hotel, and enclosed the will and the declaration of Halkett in a packet; adding a short note in which he told his hopes and their result, and, begging that his story might not be communicated to Maude, announced his intention of returning forthwith by the next ship to

America. He sent this packet by a messenger to Inglefell, and before it reached the cottage, Percy Cheyne was travelling seaward.

You may imagine the excitement which was caused by the arrival of Percy's messenger at Inglefell. Paul wisely kept back Percy's letter, as he had desired, from the happy wedding party, and only announced the discovery of the will, in which it was plain for every one to see, that all Robert Gaston's property was left to be equally divided between Mrs. Romaine and her children. As soon as Tom Benson and Maude had departed for their honeymoon, Paul put Percy's letter into his mother's hands, and then started for Grey Abbots, hoping that Cheyne might not yet have gone. He found that he had been gone some time. Tracing him at the railway station, Paul followed him to Liverpool; but in spite of all the haste he could make, he found on his arrival at Liverpool that the *Lady Clara* had sailed for America some hours previously, and that a passenger answering to Percy's description had secured his berth and gone on board at the last moment. Disheartened and vexed, Paul returned to London, and placed the will and Halkett's statement in the hands of his solicitor.

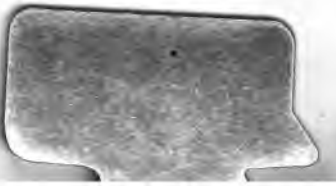
A little time after this, when Paul was once more at Inglefell, he read one morning in the *Times*, with eager half-doubting eyes, the account of the total wreck of the *Lady Clara* on the Irish coast. There could be no doubt about the fact; the details were fully given by the few who escaped alive from the wreck. It was with no feeling of wonder that Paul read the name of Percy Cheyne, passenger to New York, among the list of dead. There were no details of his death;

Paul, however, when he hurried off to the scene of the wreck, found that the dead man wore round his neck a little cross, on which the initials M. R. were engraved; and Paul knew that his sister had given the cross to Percy. Beyond that, no one knew anything: no one could tell how he died; perhaps gladly, since the joy of his life was over; perhaps murmuring, with the dying Saint Francis, "Ben venga la sorella Morte"—Welcome sister Death!

The news of Percy's fate saddened Maude's married life for a little, but only for a little. He was dead: where was the use of weeping?

I will not linger over what yet remains to be told. Philip Hyllyer, who had for some time occupied a house in a fashionable part of London, though he was said to frequent very queer society, was suddenly arrested, to his great surprise, as an accomplice in the stealing of a will. He was subsequently put upon his trial at the Old Bailey, but the evidence was not sufficient, the case broke down, and Mr. Hyllyer was discharged to obscurity. The will under which he took Gaston's property was produced, and that sent over by Halkett was very soon proved to be of later date; and by it Mrs. Romaine and her two children found themselves in possession of a comfortable though not very gigantic fortune.

And now you suppose that Paul Romaine married Edith Challoner, and that "they lived happy ever afterwards." Not so, gentle reader. Paul, when he knew of the Challoners' distress, was most assiduous, though not demonstrative, in his attentions. I doubt if Mr. Challoner would have gone on so comfortably as he did if he had not had such a friend. As for

Paul, he remembered Frank Challoner, dead and gone, and he remembered his old love for Edith—dead and gone too; and it made him eager to help her father. But Paul never married Edith; he retired to his quiet life at St. Anselm's. Would it have been better, think you, if he had resigned his Fellowship and married Edith? Perhaps so. Perhaps not. We shall never know what is best for us till we have passed through every stage, and have come at last to

The End.